

THE VOICE ON
THE MOUNTAIN



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THE VOICE ON
THE MOUNTAIN

NEW BORZOI NOVELS
FALL, 1923

JANE—OUR STRANGER
Mary Borden

THE BACHELOR GIRL
Victor Margueritte

THE BLIND BOW-BOY
Carl Van Vechten

HEART'S BLOOD
Ethel M. Kelley

THE BACK SEAT
G. B. Stern

JANET MARCH
Floyd Dell

A LOST LADY
Willa Cather

LOVE DAYS
Henrie Waste

THE VOICE ON THE MOUNTAIN

A Story for those who Understand

by MARIE, *Queen of Roumania*

*Maria, queen consort of Ferdinand, King of
Rumania*



New York ALFRED · A · KNOPF *Mcmxxiii*

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Published, October, 1923

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*Set up, electrotyped, and printed by the Vail-Ballou Co., Binghamton, N. Y.
Paper furnished by W. F. Etherington & Co., New York.
Bound by the Plimpton Press, Norwood, Mass.*

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



*Dedicated to M.,
who more than any other lives with my thoughts.*

“Lift not this painted veil
Which those who live call life.”
Shelley.

THE VOICE ON
THE MOUNTAIN

I

*. . . 'And all are crying for hopes beyond
the sunsets, for joys beyond the
stars. . . .*

M. R.

THEY were all climbing the steep mountain path. The sun was in their eyes, blinding them, but they did not linger, they did not stop; bravely they pushed forward, for were they not eager to reach the top?

Of all ages they were, men, women, and children, but their expressions were the same, for the same hope lay within their hearts. Few words passed between them. They were strangers to each other. They had come from many lands. Some were foot-sore, lame, and dusty, with clothes soiled by sun and rain. But their eyes had a curious resemblance—the resemblance of worshippers believing in one and the same faith.

A strange name were they whispering, and that name seemed to bind them together as though with a golden thread. Glava, was the name that hovered on every tongue—Glava! and when they said it, it was as though something very precious were falling from their lips. Then their eyes would meet and a

quiet smile of understanding would pass among those strangers who had come from many lands.

“Will she be there to-day?” asked an old woman as she toiled along with weary steps.

A young voice answered her out of the crowd, a voice she had never heard before. “She is always there when one needs her. But it seems that at times a great woe comes over her, and then she hides away in the dark.”

“Is it true that her ways are wild and that she rides a fire-coloured horse? That a bubbling stream springs from beneath her doorstep, and that no one—no one has ever penetrated within her house?”

Some one else had asked the question, and again another replied: “Yes, her stallion has the colour of sunset, and she carries a spear in her hand—a spear that lights in the dark. The galloping of her steed can be heard on nights of storm, for at times she is driven by a wild and inexplicable unrest. The forests love her—each tree is her friend. The dawn kisses her feet when she awakens, and the sunsets steal close to her heart. In Spring the birds greet her, and in Autumn the leaves fall as she passes, so as to form a golden carpet for her feet. The snows of winter cover her dwelling with a powder of shimmering crystals, and all the stars of heaven look down upon it, blessing it with their light. Her hair is dark, as though the sorrow of humanity had hung its veil over her head. But no warrior can ride so surely, and it is said that she can see in the dark.”

"I am bringing her a precious gift," said a man, raising a golden goblet above his head.

"She needs no gifts!" cried a youth with the face of a dreamer. "Wisdom is hers, and it flows from her lips like water from eternal sources. It needs neither gold nor precious stones to lure her into our midst. She comes, she sees, she gives, she blesses—because she understands—"

"Hast thou ever seen her?" asked many voices together, and a great yearning sounded through their words.

"No, I have never seen her," answered the youth, "but I feel her here in my soul as though we had always been together, as though her blood had flowed in my veins!"

"Thou art a dreamer," scoffed an old man at his side. "Thou believest in wonders and miracles, in things that have no place on this earth."

"Why should we be climbing this mountain?" asked a woman with a haggard countenance, pressing a sickly child to her breast. "Why should we be climbing this mountain if we did not believe and hope for miracles, if we did not expect to find Glava a being unlike ourselves?"

"I climb because I want to see," said the old man.

"And I because I am lonely," said another.

"And I because I want help."

"And I because I am weary."

"And I because my heart is aching."

"And I because I am a disbeliever!"

“And I because I need love.”

“And I because I hope to reach fame!”

“And I because my life is empty.”

“And I because I have looked into hell and hope to find heaven.”

Many voices cried out the words, the sentences rising and falling, tumbling over each other like waves straining toward a distant shore.

“Who is she?” asked some one.

“A goddess? a saint? a witch? an immortal? A being such as legends have created, a fear and a joy to those who live in the plains beneath.”

“She is Glava,” said the youth with the dreamer’s eyes—“Glava! and her name is blessed. Her words are of gold, and the touch of her hands is such that it can cure every sickness; the sound of her voice can heal any pain—”

“But it is said that no happiness lives in her soul; it is said that a secret sorrow is her only companion by day and by night. The voice that said this was toneless, like the voice of some one who has come from very far.

An old man answered it, and his words fell one by one like weights dropping to the ground. “Eternal sources can flow from beneath a gravestone, and even from a heart that is broken a radiant light can shine.”

“Is her heart broken?” asked a very small child, an awesome wonder rising in its eyes.

“We know it not,” answered the old man, “but

we are going toward her with hope in our souls, for every man imagines that the morrow may bring him, what the passing day has not brought.”“

After those words a hush fell over the climbers, and the sound of their feet alone disturbed the silence of the mountain pass.

II

*Your questioning eyes are sad. They
seek to know my meaning as the moon
would fathom the sea.*

Tagore.

“**T**HEY are coming,” said Glava. “I hear their footsteps. There are many of them; like a swollen river that rolls its waters upward instead of downward, they are advancing toward me; I think I hear their sighs, and many of them are in distress.”

Glava was standing on the threshold of her dwelling, the sun pouring down upon her head. She was speaking over her shoulder to some one in the chamber beyond. Her voice was strong and sonorous; she never raised it, yet one felt certain that it could reach further than any other voice. The light had taken possession of her body, lingering upon it as though amorous of each fold of her gown. Strange was its colour as all was strange about this woman—her face, her attire, her movements, the expression of her eyes, the smile of her lips. There was something mysterious about her, something tranquil that resembled a sleeping ocean before the storm awakes. Even her gaze seemed to be slumber-

ing in unfathomed depths; it was as though she looked inward instead of outward, and her hands appeared to be waiting to give some treasure which she alone possessed.

"Are they near?" asked a voice from within the house—a curiously toneless voice, that sounded like an old song which some one remembers when weary, when sleep begins to steal over his brain.

"No, they are still far," said Glava, "but I feel the pulsing of their hearts within my own."

"Glava!"

"Yes!"

"Art thou tired?"

Glava turned and, entering the low chamber behind her: "I am not tired," she said.

"Never tired, Glava?"

"No," said Glava, "never tired."

"Glava, dost thou always speak the truth?"

"Where is truth?" said Glava. "Does it lie close to the clouds of heaven? or think ye that I tread upon it when my feet pass over the ground?"

"Glava, art thou tired?" repeated the voice; and something like ill-contained anxiety rang through the words.

Glava had entered a low chamber, large, spacious, shadowy. At the farther end a long broad window let in an unexpected light; and near this window, upon a fur-covered couch, lay a man—a man with a wonderful face. The light of the window fell full

upon it, revealing its extraordinary paleness and its sunken indescribable eyes—the eyes of a mystic, of a martyr—eyes full of extraordinary pain. The man had the expression which great masters have carved upon images of the dying Christ. The resemblance was enhanced by the long hair and by the soft fair beard that covered cheeks and chin. The head was reclining amongst cushions. Naught was to be seen of the body except two emaciated arms which lay on the cover. This was drawn up over his breast. Two emaciated arms and two colourless hands rested there like holy effigies on the tomb of some saint.

Glava went up to the couch and laid the tips of her fingers against one of those hands. The man's eyes closed for an instant as though that touch filled him with ineffable well-being.

“I am never tired, Gorromo, never tired—I am not of those whose bodies complain. My limbs are of iron, and the blood runs like a strong stream through my veins.”

“Art thou not tired of their voices, Glava? of their voices and desires and prayers? tired of listening to their complaints, tired of carrying their burdens on thy shoulders, their tears in thy heart?”

“It is not in vain that I was made unlike other women,” answered Glava—“with another face, with other ways and other ambitions; that I was made to live up here on this mountain-top.”

“Art thou not tired of thy Love, Glava?” said the

man with curious persistence. "Art thou not weary, weary unto death?"

Bending down toward the questioner, Glava very gently raised the marvellous head in both her hands—raised it and looked deep into the sorrowful eyes. "I am not tired of my Love, Gorromó," she said very simply. "I am not tired of my Love."

"How many years is it now, Glava? how many years?"

"Four," said Glava tenderly, laying his head back amongst its cushions.

"Four years since I have weighted thy life?"

"Four years since thou hast blessed my dwelling with thy presence," corrected Glava; "four years since that stormy winter's night when—"

"Four years since I have lain here useless—a burden, immovable, living yet dead!"

"Four years since I have drunk from the inexhaustible sources of thy wisdom, Gorromó—since I have leant upon the never-failing courage of thy heart!" And, throwing herself with a sudden movement to her knees, Glava laid her head upon the sad man's breast.

"It is I, Glava," said he, "who have been drawing upon thy strength; it is thou who hast been giving and giving—it is thou who has kept me alive with thy love!"

Glava did not answer. She had closed her eyes; her head moved slightly up and down with the breathing of the man's breast. Her long lashes lay

like a shadow on her cheeks; grave, almost stern, was the line of her lips; like a curtain of dusk her tresses flowed over her shoulders down to the floor.

An ineffable peace pervaded the chamber—an atmosphere akin to that of a church. Something mysterious, inexplicable, something almost holy, lay over these two strange beings whom some past joy—or was it sorrow?—seemed to have linked together in a common fate.

“Because of me thou hast no sorrow,” spoke the man. “Because of me thine eyes alone have share in the joys of spring, whilst it were thy right to live, to feel, to enjoy, according to the warm young blood that courses through thy veins!”

“Because of thee,” answered Glava, “each day I feel a new strength within me, a strength that enables me to give and give with ever full hands—give all that others need of me. My word has become law; they one and all believe that my touch can heal. I have become an oracle unto them, because I pronounce the words which thou hast put into my soul.”

“But what hast thou for thyself, Glava?”

“I have thee, Gorromó—I have thee!”

“Does it suffice thee, Glava?” A sound of anguish was in the man’s voice. Glava did not answer immediately, so the question was repeated, but lower, as though the lips that pronounced it were afraid of the answer they might receive.

“It sufficeth me,” said Glava, and her voice was

like that of a priest's praying before an altar when no one is nigh.

Silence lay for a while over the man and the woman, and then Gorrommo asked: "Are they not coming nearer, Glava?"

"Yes," said Glava, rising to her feet. "Soon they will be here."

"Wilt thou not clothe thyself in white to receive them? in white, as is thy wont?"

"Yes," said Glava, bending down to kiss his forehead. "I must be worthily attired, for they believe in me as they believe in the sun that rises every morning beyond the limits of their world."

"Dost thou not believe in thyself, Glava?"

"There are things that exist in spite of one's belief or disbelief," was the enigmatic answer. "Often it is the belief of others that can lead one to one's own height. Many hands outstretched toward one can teach one to draw from sources one knew not to exist. The great need of others lifts one above oneself. The hands of those who give are always full, for the wisdom of the heart is limitless; the grief of others enables it to discover a thousand ways."

"Glava! Glava!" cried the man, covering his face with his hands; and difficult it were to know if he cried out in pain or in joy.

Again Glava kissed him; then slowly she moved away from the bed.

The sufferer uncovered his face and stared after

her, his soul in his eyes; then, turning toward the window, he gazed out upon the wide horizon that stretched before him.

"The skies withhold their knowledge," he murmured. "In vain do I ask of them the verities I long to know. Deep as the ocean is the heart of woman, and it is not given to man to see what sleeps in its depths; nor have I ever been able to decipher the message that lies dormant behind Glava's eyes. But I know that it lies there—I have felt it. One day it may awaken. But that day—that day will be another's—that day will no more be mine!"

Then again the man with the eyes of sorrow covered his face with his hands. . . .

III

It was as though bearing between her hands her own heart she were lifting it up for sacrifice and worship.

Hellett.

“DRAW my couch close up to the window. I want to see her. She is marvellous when she stands there, like a goddess with her spear in her hand.”

“And it will be no spear she has in her hand to-day: both her hands are resting upon the hilt of a naked sword.”

It was an old woman who spoke. She was leaning out of the window, both palms pressed upon the sill, her dim eyes straining toward the spot where Glava stood.

“Draw my couch nearer, Volona; have pity upon my helplessness. Quickly, Volona! my eyes are athirst for her face. Volona, Volona, make haste!”

The old woman turned toward Gorrommo. She was of unusual stature, tall, upright, with remnants of past beauty. Strangely did her white hair contrast with the dark brown that shaded her sunken orbs. In straight lines her black gown flowed down over her gaunt limbs. Her shoulders were square, and her hands were large and strong like those of a man.

Round her waist she wore a leathern girdle into which a dagger had been thrust.

"Art so eager for a sight of her face! and sure she has quitted thee but a second ago!" said the old woman somewhat sternly, complying nevertheless with Gorromó's wishes by pushing the high couch close up to the window so that he could gaze outside without raising his head.

"Her face is my world," said the man, "and when my eyes are upon her it is to me as though she had more strength to divide amongst those that come to ask her help. I hear not their words, but methinks my soul is speaking in hers when she answers."

Volona was arranging the cushions under the sufferer's head, and whilst doing so she was gazing in the same direction as her master. "Yes," agreed the old servant, "and methinks it is right that thou art. It is as though some voice not her own were speaking with her tongue. Often I had the thought of my thinking that she is in a trance when thus she touches the sick and heals them, finding those strange words that console the broken-hearted—those words that the hopeless will be carrying back with them like bread upon which they can feed."

"Was she always thus?" asked Gorromó.

"And it is always strange and mysterious that she has been," said the old woman guardedly.

"Volona, wilt thou never answer me with absolute truth? Wilt thou never answer my question unto the end?"

"The length of a truth, I am thinking, is not measured by words," said the old woman, "nor will human hearts be gardens within which all hands may be plucking blossoms."

"Are my hands stranger's hands?"

"Each soul, I am thinking, has a right to its own corner of shadow," said the servant.

"Are there many shadows in Glava's soul? Speak, Volona!"

"Look at her as she stands there, tall and radiant in her flowing garb; look how the sun lies over her, and thou shalt be answering for thyself, if she seems to be a lover of things that are dark."

"Volona, I would like to tear speech from thy tongue!" cried Gorrommo, and there was a rising anguish in his voice.

The gaunt woman laid a strong hand upon the sick man's forehead. "Be at peace, my lord," said her curious voice. "Glava will be standing so far above other mortals that no tongue could bring her nearer to those who do not understand. I will not be for understanding her, I accept her as one of the laws of nature, thanking Fate that allowed me to tread the same earth over which her shadow falls. Some beings are like stars I am thinking, that shine in dark skies. One loves their light, but to see them one must be lifting one's head."

"Glava is more than a star," said Gorrommo. "To me she is as an eternal dawn rising in never-ending glory."

"I will be preferring the stars," said Volona. "One can look at them without closing one's eyes."

"I feel as though I carried all her light in my heart," said Gorromo, pressing his hands to his breast.

"Therefore it is that thou art never at rest, I am thinking," said Volona. "Man needs the shadows of night as well as the glories of dawn. Nature has given us darkness after the day so that we should sleep part of our lives; otherwise one heart would not be sufficing us till the end of our road."

"I see her light also when I sleep," murmured Gorromo. "In the middle of the night it often seems to me that her heart is beating here in mine!"

"Look!" cried the old servant, interrupting his words, "look! And it is coming they are! The first have already reached the top of the mountain. See! a poor woman has laid her infant down at Glava's feet—an old man is touching the hem of her gown!—a beautiful youth has put a rose into her hand—three old hags have fallen on their knees before her—and I am seeing several priests amongst the crowd, and soldiers with spears and shields, and rich men in sumptuous attire. There are beggars, and even lepers, and many little children. And it is straining toward her they are, stretching out their hands! Now Glava has laid her sword on the ground!"

Volona had skilfully passed her hands beneath the sufferer's shoulders and was holding him against her breast. With wide-open eyes both were following

Glava's movements, rapid exclamations escaping their lips close upon each other, sometimes cried out in a single breath.

"It is talking she is!"

"See how they listen!"

"They treat her as though she were a saint! when they touch the folds of her vestment, each one will be believing that he is healed!"

"Oh! see the light in the eyes of that boy; it is as though he were looking through the gates of Heaven!"

"And wilt thou be seeing how that tall man has laid a crown at her feet?"

"The small children cluster around her; she bends down to them, she takes them in her arms, she lays her lips on their curls. Ah! look at those women, at those many women—it is as though they were casting all their sorrow from their hearts into hers!"

"See, the priests will be blessing her with upraised hands. And the soldiers will be touching her gown with their spears; they have laid their shields at her feet on the ground."

"They are casting flowers before her, flowers and branches of palms!"

"See the golden-headed urchin who toddles up to her with a dove in his arms. And it is now the cripple boy who will be casting his crutches away to stand upright, unsupported, folding his hands in prayer whilst his eyes devour her with hungry looks! And the old man, oh! see the old man who will be

clasping her waist and who will be crying with his head on her bosom, like a weary wanderer who has reached his home at last!"

"How can she bear it? how can she bear it?" gasped Gorromo, and Volona let him sink from her arms into the cushions, where he remained without movement, his eyes closed, his face pale as death. "How can she bear it?" he murmured again.

Volona approached the window and leant far out. Marvellous was the view on this side of the house. Those who climbed the steep mountain pass were quite unprepared for the sight that met them when they reached the summit. A sudden illimitable stretch of blue bordered their horizon, revealing to them that it was the sea that lay beneath them—the sea in its endless, mysterious, unbounded immensity. The narrow path that led upward had not seemed to promise such a reward. Like a snake without either tail or head it wound and curved amidst rocks and crevasses, coming from the flat-lands, mounting toward unknown heights; but when the climber's tired foot reached the top, this glorious surprise burst upon him like a miracle revealed to his eye.

Glava was standing against the shimmering background of blue. Upright she stood like the statue of a goddess, her long white robe falling in heavy folds to her feet, the spotted fur of a panther slung over one shoulder. She was crowned with a golden circlet, out of the sides of which two golden wings

spread like rays of light; a golden girdle was about her waist and golden sandals on her feet; the hilt of the sword that hung at her side was richly studded with gems. Black as night was the hair that fell over her back. Her strangely comprehensive hands, with the gesture of a sister of mercy, were pressing the head of an old man to her breast. Volona could not hear the words she was saying, but she could see the look in her eyes and she could see the expression on the old man's face.

More and more pilgrims flocked around her. It was as though the earth had opened, giving passage to men of all kinds and degrees. Some had thrown themselves on the ground, some were dead tired, some were crushed by sickness, others bent by age, some were in tatters, others were clad in rich clothing soiled by the dust of the road; but all had their eyes riveted upon Glava's face, their pupils distended with different expressions of longing or hope. Glava's white-clad figure towered above them. All the light from the heavens seemed to have singled her out, pouring down upon her, marking her as a being apart.

Volona had never heard what words Glava spoke to those pilgrims that climbed the mountain to reach her voice, but a curious thing had the old servant observed: at the end of those hours, after Glava had spent her strength, her heart, and her sympathy upon the crowd, it was the man who

awaited her return upon his couch who seemed to be exhausted; but always more luminous did Glava come back to his side.

A deep sigh from Gorrommo made Volona turn toward him.

"It is over," he murmured. "Now they will be leaving her, and they all have the feeling that their pilgrimage was not in vain!"

"Yes, it is moving away they are," exclaimed Volona. "It is kissing her hands they are, her sandals, the hem of her dress. They have left their offerings scattered round her; the crown the man laid at her feet is shining like a light. A youth with wonderful eyes is staring at her; he cannot tear his eyes from her face. The others are all going, but the youth will be riveted to the spot. Now he also will be tearing himself away, but he turns his head many times, he stumbles over the stones as he goes; his feet raise small clouds of dust! Glava is now alone, like a white column of marble she will be standing motionless against the blue, blue sea—"

Gorrommo did not move. He lay amongst his cushions, his hands pressed over his eyes.

"It is coming she is," whispered Volona, bending toward him.

"I know it," said Gorrommo; "I feel her steps in my heart."

Volona moved the cushions beneath his head, raising it somewhat; and thus the two awaited the coming of the woman who had been adored like a saint.

The door opened, and Glava stood upon the threshold. The sun seemed to follow her; like a golden river it flowed into the room beneath her feet. Her hands were full of flowers and her eyes full of light.

She came toward them; and it was to the two who were in the shade as though all the joy of the world had entered with her into the house.

IV

*My heart longs to join in thy song, but
vainly struggles for a voice.*

Tagore.

DEEP snow lay over the mountain world, covering it with a shroud of white. Ghostly was its sleep beneath the cold rays of the moon. It had become a thing of dreams, fantastic, unearthly, a vision ending in space. The dark pine forests rose out of the whiteness like prodigious armies of ghosts climbing unreasonable heights. Each hidden ravine and gloomy gorge lay revealed to the eye as though they had been secrets which the moon had discovered with her silvery light. From their undisputed seats in the heavens the stars looked down, contemplating with ecstasy the earth beneath. A heavy silence resembling that of the tomb lay over all things, filling them with a solemnity that made the heart stand still.

Glava's house of stone was also shrouded in white; but, unlike all else, this mysterious habitation was not sleeping. It appeared to be watching the stillness with an immense eye of light. In a dazzling patch the broad window threw its radiance out over the snow, where it lay like a magic garden filled with

flaming flowers. Like all things appertaining to Glava, this golden square before her dwelling was full of an ineffable charm. It was as though her heart had placed it there as a shining beacon amidst the shadows of night.

Within the large chamber a great fire was leaping on the hearth. Gorromo's couch had been drawn up beside it, and the changing light of the flames played over his pale features, lighting them up suddenly and just as suddenly leaving them in the dark; for no other light was burning in the room.

Glava was standing with her back to the blaze. Blue, bordered with gold, was the long loose robe she wore; her hair was plaited in two thick plaits that fell down over her bosom, baring the nape of her neck; her white arms were raised, and her white fingers were busy polishing the blade of a sword. Unusual, no doubt, was this work for a maiden. Fascinated, Gorromo watched the shining steel between the fingers of the woman he loved. As usual his eyes devoured her countenance, seeming to drink life from her face, to absorb her beauty like a narcotic that could still any suffering, ease any longing, lifting him beyond his pain.

A strange song was Glava singing as she flashed the blade hither and thither over her head. And Glava's voice was not as other voices. It seemed rather to be a blending of wind and water, of waves and whispering leaves. Glava's voice seemed to belong to the things of nature, coming from her deep

bosom as the storm rises from the heart of the woods. At that moment Glava appeared unaware of all else but her song and her sword. The steel she was polishing began to shine like silver beneath her touch. Then suddenly she lowered the blade and, with a sweet laugh quite unlike the deep notes of her song, she said: "When I thus point my blade to the ground it is to me as though a magic light were slipping like water through my fingers."

"Why dost thou so love that shining steel?" asked Gorromo, watching her face.

"I like its quality," said Glava, "its possibilities, and the sound of its voice when it rings upon stone."

"But the sound of its voice when it drinks human blood—thou wouldst surely not love its voice then?"

Glava laughed and held up the shining weapon toward the ceiling. "I love it as a woman loves the things she loves," was the answer—"because of the beauty of their colour, or because of the hopes she attaches to them, or because of the destinies toward which they may lead her through unknown glories into endless lands of dreams!"

"Where do thy thoughts lead thee, Glava?"

Again Glava laughed. Silver-clear was the sound. And, laying the sword down upon the hearth, she drew up a low stool beside the man's couch and, closing her fingers over his hands, she laid her head close to his face. "My thoughts are like butterflies that Spring awakens and that take their flight through many lands. I think that some are blue

and dance over nothing but flowers, flitting hither and thither till they are caught up into light. Others are soft-winged, shadow-tinted, fluttering mysteriously through dark woods into shady glens. Others are quite white and float like tiny sails over endless seas into unknown lands. Others are small and anxious, hovering over spots where the dead lie sleeping 'neath heavy stones. And some are as golden as children's visions; and those fly straight up into the skies."

"Are there none that, like night-moths, fly to and fro seeking something they do not find?"

"No," said Glava, "but there are those that return ever again here to their home"—and, so saying, the woman laid her lips softly upon Gorromó's heart.

Pressing her head against him with one of his hands, the man murmured (and there were tears in his voice): "Oh! may it ever be thy home! may thy thoughts never seek another world, thy feet lead thee to other places!"

"However long my wanderings may be, however wild my rides, however wildly inviting the world, however glorious the sun and invigorating the storms, instinctively my feet lead me back to thy couch."

The man sighed, and Glava, raising her head, looked into the flames that flared and hissed and crackled as though eager to relate many things. Crossing her hands over her knees she leaned forward, staring into the glare. "Hast thou ever

thought," she said in a dreamy voice, "of how tremendous and destructive are the passions of the elements? See those flames, how eagerly they rush up the chimney, how greedily they consume the logs; they are hurrying, hurrying toward they know not what; and yet, when the wood beneath them is devoured, their life is also a thing of the past; they die with the wood they are destroying—their beauty, their force, their victory falls to ashes, or floats away in smoke. And the floods of Spring! they tear down trees and hurl stones from enormous heights, they froth and bubble and leap and scream, only to end in sluggish waters carrying refuse toward all-engulfing seas. The winds have many voices, they storm and rage and cry, spending themselves in useless fury; and no one understanding what their ravaging is about, till they die away after having broken some branches, up-rooted some trees, uncovered the hovel of some shivering wretch. Was not their strength all given in vain?"

"Art thou sad, Glava?" asked Gorromomo tenderly.

"Oh! no, I am not sad: I am only thinking. And when I think, I see many things—so many that they dance before my brain in a never-ending round. And each thought seems to open another door into passages with many turnings—"

"Then we come back to thy butterflies, Glava—to thy butterflies that one day may wing away from home."

Glava turned her face toward him. "Gorromomo,"

she said, "it is thy thoughts that lead thee ever and again the one same way. They seem to lead thee to a spot where an immense dread or an immense pain lies hidden. Speak, Gorromó. What is it? speak!"

The man did not answer; he only closed his eyes as though wishing to conceal some secret from the girl at his side. But Glava laid her lips on his hand.

"What is it, Gorromó? I feel that that same sorrow is ever again bubbling up from thy heart as a spring bubbles from beneath the sand, or as blood bursts anew from a half-healed wound."

"Glava"—all the man's soul was in the single word—"Glava! Glava! when a man holds a precious treasure, a treasure he considers of priceless worth, to be found but once upon earth—each day on awakening and each night on closing his eyes, that man wonders if the morrow will still permit him to call it his own. Each hour he trembles for it, each passing season he thanks God for having left it between his hands. And thou knowest, Glava—I can hardly be called a man; I am a wreck—a fallen tree that once stood upright—like other trees!"

"A tree that fell because of me," said Glava in her deep-toned voice.

But Gorromó made no reply.

"That fell because of me," repeated Glava. "I was the storm that broke thy life. And it was night. The snow lay over the ground, but no moon was

shining then. . . . No moon. . . . The wind was howling over the rocks, tearing like mad hordes through the forest that bent beneath its wrath. And I was riding—riding like a spirit of night let loose—riding swiftly, caring little whither I flew—”

“And I,” said Gorromomo, “galloped after thee, following thy spear that shone in the dark.”

“And I laughed!” continued Glava. “I laughed because for many days I had already led thee thus from place to place. I felt invincible, I felt as though I were part of the wild world through which I rushed—I wanted to measure my strength with thine, to prove that I was the stronger, that in vain thy hands were extended to catch me, that in vain thy voice tried to soften my heart. I did not believe that I loved thee; my only instinct was to flee, knowing that thy desire would pursue me, were it to the end of the earth.”

“Our stallions were equal in strength,” said Gorromomo.

“But thine was unaccustomed to the dark,” murmured Glava.

“Therefore it died,” said Gorromomo, and there was a sound of Fate in his voice.

“Therefore it died,” repeated Glava, and a heavy silence fell between them like a sword. The girl’s fingers had closed over the sufferer’s hand, and their four eyes were staring into the flames.

“They brought thee back here,” said Glava at

length—"back here to my dwelling. And at first I thought thou wert dead. Then the love I had denied burst like a flame from my heart; I cried upon God to leave thee to me, not to tear thee away—and God had mercy, he answered my prayer, he left thee."

"Broken!" the word came from Gorromó's lips like a wail. "Broken! as a mast that was not strong enough to outlast the gale, as a tree that fell, uprooted by the storm!"

"Ah! but my love was born in that hour," cried Glava, throwing herself down at his side; "was born in that hour, making me what now I am! Till then I was but a wild and tameless being, little more than a ruthless huntress rushing through forest and fen, going whither my desire led me, recognizing no master but my lawless will—living alone with the old servant who had reared me in this lonely place. But in that night a great light burst suddenly from my soul, changing the world within and without. And dost thou remember the first day when my hands were laid upon a sufferer and he departed healed from my house?"

"Yes," said Gorromó. "Since then they all come to thee as though thou wert an angel of God! 'The Voice on the Mountain,' they call thee, and thou art to them as a new Faith for which they have been waiting all their lives."

"It is my love that gives me that curious power," whispered Glava; "my love for thee."

But very softly the man murmured; "Perhaps it is only my love for thee."

"What is the difference?" asked Glava, looking into his eyes.

"The difference," smiled the man sadly, "is that the one is as water flowing from an eternal source, whilst the other is but a miracle that one day can come to an end."

"Why?" asked Glava, and there was wonder in her voice.

"Because I am a thing that life has done with," said Gorromo, "a fallen trunk that lies rotting on the ground; but thou art as a glorious fruit-tree whose branches each Spring covers anew with blossoms and leaves, that sun and wind delight in because of their beauty and because of their youth."

"But I love thee!" cried Glava. "Thee alone do I love! Because of thee I feel this unknown power to heal, to bless, and to console. When I stand facing the multitude, it is to me as though thou stoodst behind me filling my soul with light, moving my tongue with words to which thy heart alone hath the key."

"My heart overflows," said Gorromo, "for do I not lie here useless, a thing of the past, so that all I feel accumulates within my bosom till it would burst asunder unless I opened its sluices, letting the swollen waters out?"

"They all run into my heart," said Glava, "anointing my fingers, giving them the strange power of

healing others, teaching my tongue words it has never before known, opening my eyes to a light they had never seen."

"It is a blessed mystery," whispered Gorromó. "May God allow it to last!"

"It has lasted four years," was Glava's reply.

"Yes, but each day brings the hour nearer when the charm may break."

"Why?" asked Glava, as a child might have asked. "Because a thread much used grows thin!"

"Do not be so sorrowful!" cried Glava. "Are we not together? Does not the same roof shelter our heads, does not the same flame warm our bodies, does not the same love lie in our hearts?"

"Is it the same?" And the man fell back amongst his cushions with a groan. "Is it the same? Is it the same?"

Glava did not answer; but, rising from her seat, she bent over him and, putting her lips on his, she kissed him. She kissed him as Spring kisses the earth, as the Sun kisses the slumbering seed, as Eternity kisses the tomb of the Dead.

The bare chamber was full of the light of their love. But beneath the lips of the woman he worshipped it was to the sufferer as though his heart must break.

V

*I feel that my limbs are made glorious
by the touch of this world of life.
'And my pride is from the life-throb of
ages, dancing in my blood.*

Tagore.

GLAVA was standing on a rock looking down upon a sea of clouds. The entire world appeared to have been transformed into a chaos of moving masses, grey-white, mysterious, impenetrable. Precipitous were the sides of the crag she had climbed, and her eyes had the look of an eagle's as they scanned the distance, whilst from all sides the mists rose in frothing billows, as though the world beneath her were but a gigantic cauldron sending up its steam to veil her in shifting vapours. Glava enjoyed her perilous position. No height made her giddy; she was at home in this wilderness of stone and clouds; she loved its desolation, its solitude; she had the sensation that she could spread great wings and fly into the seething ocean which hid the world from her sight. Was there a world beneath? or had a monstrous fire consumed it? Was she perhaps the last mortal looking down upon the smoking remains of an immense disaster, a vast ruin

of which the dying fumes rose towards her in fabulous pillars of smoke?

These thoughts passed vaguely through the girl's mind as she stood there all alone, like some mythological huntress who had lost her way in the wilderness. Short was her tunic, reaching to her knees. Wound round her slim legs were leathern thongs. Strong sandals were on her feet. The spotted leopard-skin was slung about her shoulders. A fur cap was pressed down upon her forehead, beneath which her long hair floated out, a dark mass amidst snowy clouds. In her hand she held a spear; its shining point pierced the mist like a tiny light.

"The snows are melting in the valleys beneath," spoke Glava aloud to herself. It was her wont to hold conversation with herself, with rock and tree, storm and wind, sky and earth. "Yes, the snow is melting, and a breath from the plains came, wafted through space even unto my nest on the crags. The first call it was. But many will follow, for now comes the season when I can find no rest and when I feel I must wander like a roving deer over every path."

She raised her spear above her head, swinging it about as though she could thus disperse the mists. "Glorious indeed is this seething mass of white, but it only floats there so as to render more intense my desire to pierce it—my eyes feel like two arrows that could penetrate any obstacle, and my arms are full of untried strength. Ah, Gorromó! couldst thou but

stand here beside me on this perilous height, thy all-seeing eyes would open out unto me views which I in my ignorance cannot divine.

“Gorromo! Gorromo! why must thou lie there bound to thy bed, smothering a long cry of suffering in thy heart—an eternal yearning for thy shattered strength making of thy days a torture and of thy nights a dread? I give thee all that I can, for I love thee; I feel the anguish that comes over thee whenever I move from the house. Yet there are times when I must wander, for my limbs are unbroken and uncrushed my strength. I belong to the winds, to the sun and to the storms; I belong to the earth and to the sky that spreads above; I am a child of nature and amongst the things of nature must I move, must I love. Ah! if only it had not been because of me that thy life had been broken! If only I could have had thee one day for myself such as thou must have been once! But because of me—because of me!—thou liest there for ever crippled; the winds of spring cannot rouse thee, nor the heat of summer, nor the Autumn storms—no! nor even my love, my warm pulsing love!

“But my love cannot tie me down to thy side—something within me cries for the wilds, something untamed that needs space and freedom, that at times must be let loose like the wandering winds, or like the leaping torrents that the melting snows have swelled!”

In wild ecstasy her voice rose above the clouds,

echoing round the rocks, which seemed to answer her in chorus; then suddenly she laughed and, springing lightly from crag to crag, began climbing down from her height. With the unerring instinct of a mountain chamois she frayed herself a way through mist and fog. She had no need to see where she was going; her foot took possession of the rocks; she never lost her balance, nor did she stumble over any stone. Her movements might be likened unto the flow of running water, unto the passage of a cloud over the heavens, unto a wave leaping with the tide; the wind seemed to be chasing her, tearing at her hair and the fur that floated from her shoulders.

Glava reached the narrow path that led to the valley beneath. Little of it could be seen, because the mists that covered it were rolling their vapours upon it like a phantom flock of sheep. But Glava was out of breath; so she sat down upon a granite block, holding her spear in her hand. Like a Queen she sat there looking down upon her lands that were invaded by clouds. Her bosom was heaving, her eyes were bright, a strange smile of exultation was on her lips, for Glava loved to wander thus amidst the elements that recognized her as part of themselves.

Again she began to talk aloud. The words came like a song from her lips. The clouds appeared to be hovering close to her so as to hear her voice; they lay over her head, they crept round her feet, they stole near her heart, slipping through her fingers like thin wisps of smoke. Glava's whole figure

seemed to be steaming; it was as though the vapours were rising out of the ardour of her blood.

“Oh! clouds!” spoke Glava, “ye pretend to be invincible, ye do as though no wind could blow you away, dense ye are as fleecy wool before the spinning; but real strength is not yours. Spring has but to breathe upon you and ye are a thing of the past. But I am in no hurry. I love the curtain with which ye mask many wonders; each year anew they are my soul’s delight, and each season brings its gift.”

Then, softening her voice, Glava began to talk to the man who could not follow her; to the man whom she had left in the dwelling above. “Be not anxious, O Gorromó, my love, Glava will return to thy heart; as she sits here enveloped by mists she feels thy pulses beating in hers, she feels the call of thy longing, she feels as it were thy breath on her hand, she sees thy great and sorrowful eyes, she hears the deep words that come from thy tongue. Gorromó, dear love, I will not linger over-long; my steps shall lead me back to thy side. But, Gorromó, remember, before I was thine I belonged to this great world that has no boundaries. Now my world is thy love, my wisdom is the beauty I drink from thy soul! Forgive me if sometimes I wander from thy couch; be not aggrieved, be not sorrowful; for, Gorromó my love, I shall always come back to thy heart. But Gorromó, thou knowest not how strong are my limbs, how throbbing the flow of my blood; thou dreamest not how tremendous is the impulse that drives me

abroad; thou hast never heard, save once, the strength of my voice—and that once, O Gorromomo, it brought thee too near to the Shadow of Death.

“Gorromomo! Gorromomo, too full is this vast world of voices, and too full of ardour the calling seasons; it is to me sometimes as though I must answer them, raising my voice above the storm, the wind, and the clouds.” And, springing to her feet, Glava gave forth a strange and uncanny call that rang round the mountains, dying away in the distance like thunder a great way off. Weird indeed was this voice on the mountain—almost unearthly, a sound belonging to the spirit-world. Then again Glava laughed a laugh that seemed to bubble up from the depth of her being like waters bursting irresistibly from the heart of a rock.

Suddenly out of the silence another voice that was not the mountain-echo answered hers—a deep voice that came from the clouds beneath her. Like a startled deer, Glava stood listening, her hand to her ear, her lips half open, her eyes a-kinde with suppressed excitement; and almost unconsciously she once more sent forth the call that her voice alone could utter. Again the voice from below answered; like a great cry of yearning it came, piercing the clouds that enveloped her, stealing through the mists like a message from the world beneath.

Glava stood listening. Somehow this voice did not astonish her. Too well did it rhyme with the wild mood she was in. She hardly even wondered to

whom it might belong. It was but the response of the cry she had sent out from the fulness of her soul. Little did it matter who was the climber mounting toward her. Seating herself quietly upon her granite throne, Glava waited—waited like a sovereign who knows that a messenger is nearing.

A sudden sunray pierced the clouds, spreading a golden shine over the mists till they shimmered like a sea of light, wondrous to behold. Glava watched it, drinking with her eyes the marvel that was spreading beneath her. Glava could sit extraordinarily still. Her splendid limbs had a way of falling into complete repose, so that she seemed to form one with the rocks, like a statue carved in stone.

And it came to pass that the clouds parted suddenly, and that a man stood before Glava—a man all clad in white. Rising from her seat, Glava stared at him, and he stared back at Glava, neither speaking a word.

Then the clouds closed behind the stranger, and the light departed as suddenly as it had come. Man and woman stood facing earth other, encircled by mists.

VI

*I am the end to which the whole world
strives. Therefore are ye girdled with
wild desire and shod with sorrow.*

'Alfred Noyes.

“**W**HO art Thou?” asked Glava in her deep-toned voice.

“A wanderer,” was the answer, “who, having heard the name of Glava, has come toward her because of a great need stirring in his heart.”

“I know not the garb thou wearest,” said Glava. “Never have I seen man thus clad, though pilgrims from all countries have come to my dwelling, seeking my help.

“I am a monk,” said the stranger, “and have no right to be here.”

“Why didst thou come, then?” enquired Glava. “The way is long, and snow still lies on my mountain top; it is not the season when pilgrims search out my abode.”

“There is no special season for sorrow!” said the monk. “And art thou not the new hope that has risen like a wondrous dawn in souls that are weary? Art thou not the Voice on the Mountain that calls to the disheartened toiling in the valleys beneath?”

"What is thy labour?" asked Glava.

"The searching for God!"

"And thou hast not found Him?"

"No," said the monk.

"Thinkest thou perchance that I can help thee to find Him?" asked Glava, her eyes searching his face.

"All ways have I tried," said the monk, "and none led me to light. Then I heard speak of Glava. The name was as wonderful music to my ears; so I came."

"A long way it is," repeated Glava. "And how didst thou escape from thy convent walls?"

"I am sent on a pilgrimage to some holy shrine, for the abbot guessed that other spirits were in conflict with the Spirit of God in my soul. But my feet took another direction, leading me here, up on to the mountain in search of the voice."

"What belief hast thou that I can help thee?" asked the woman.

"The belief of the drowning one who clings to a last only hope."

Glava was silent for a moment; then she asked: "Who spoke to thee of Glava?"

"Who spoke!" cried the man. "Who spoke? Wist ye not that Glava is a name that has the sound of Spring after long winter-storms? Glava is a name that rings down from the heights like Easter bells announcing the Resurrection! The poor carry the name of Glava like a star in their hearts, the warrior

adores it as he adores the banner he follows to war, the dying murmur it when the Great Shadow touches them with its wing, little children pronounce it as they would pronounce the name of a great wonder that has come to pass, and those that are groping in obscurity yearn towards it as the prisoner yearns for light. The name of Glava is on every tongue, the name of Glava has spread like a heavenly blessing over the dark lives of men."

Glava gazed at the stranger, a curious flame in her eyes. How haggard was the face that was lifted to hers—young, yet ravaged by passion, and with a wild look in the eyes. Ascetic were his features, pale, distraught by emotion; his hands were trembling, and his weary feet left traces of blood on the snow. Glava stared at him as she would have stared at a page which she could not decipher. Pity stirred within her—pity mingled with a strange feeling of dread. She was accustomed to eyes full of sorrow—for were not Gorromo's dark pupils two deep wells of pain?—but different was the gaze of this stranger. It seemed to pierce her like fiery daggers, and the expression of his lips was at the same time hungry and humble, like a hunted creature's seeking refuge in a desolate spot.

The hem of his habit was stained and dirty from the long road he had travelled, but the body that the coarse woollen cloth concealed seemed full of ill-restrained ardour, as though some feverish impulse were continually kept in check.

“How can I help thee,” said Glava slowly, “unless I know what thy suffering is and what need has sent thee forth?”

“It is the need of thee!” cried the man. “The need of thee!”

Spell-bound, Glava stared at him. His hot eyes devoured her, his lips were parched as though by some tremendous thirst, his hands seemed to want to grasp at a fleeing shape. Glava stepped back, standing spear in hand like the guardian of some forbidden portal, whilst the grey mists rose like smoke above her head.

“It is thee I need, Glava—the Voice on the Mountain—the woman whose marvellous name has filled all souls with hope. Thine eyes do I need, thy hands, thy touch, the deep understanding of thy heart.”

“I still do not comprehend how I can help thee,” repeated Glava, her voice full of compassion, a strange emotion ringing through her words, for never had such mendicant climbed the mountain path. “Rest here beside me and speak to me of thy trouble, for never do I close mine ear to a voice that is in pain; tell me what it was that drove thee to these heights, tell me thy name, thy desire, speak to me of thy hope. And perhaps Glava will be able to help thee, to lift the weight from thy heart!” Signing to him to be seated, the maiden resumed her place on the rock, there to await the confession of the stranger who had escaped his monastery walls.

But with a sudden movement the monk was on his

knees at her feet, clasping her robe with his hands. "Glava!" he cried,—“all my life has been one long cry toward something I could not find! I have searched for it on the faces of the monks that rule my life, I have searched for it in the stars of heaven, hunted for it amongst the wise words in sainted books; I have searched for it in heavenly harmonies, in the hymns that mounted like incense to the throne of God; and lately I have been searching for it upon painted effigies of the saints.

“Is it peace that I am seeking? is it peace? I think it is not peace. That which I am seeking has another name.”

The man's voice rose towards Glava like a loud wail of distress. “Too young was I imprisoned behind convent walls. My mother was a wandering gypsy who died when the bloom of spring was just fading from her face; and my father, who was a great warrior, had loved her with a terrible love. Burdened with an infant that reminded him too sorely of the one he had lost, not knowing what to do with this living proof of a love that had passed like a dream, he took it to a holy convent and there he offered up his only child to the service of God—left it there as a babe, little imagining that his wild blood, mingled with that of the mother, would awake one day to become the curse of the son he had abandoned long ago. . . .

“I will not describe my long sufferings; I will not speak of my doubts and of my struggles, or of the

self-inflicted chastisement which I made my body undergo, or of the martyrdom to which my masters subjected me, or of my nights of torture and the days of raving inexplicable desire, filled with haunted dread. I will only confess to thee that with each passing year more destructive became the furnace burning within me, so that I felt at times that I must lift my clenched fist and shake it in the face of the smiling Virgin who looked down on me in eternal divine indifference, there in the chapel where I tried to pray. I knew that one day I should stand up before them all and insult her with hard words if she did not open her sweet lips to speak of Love!

“Love! Ah, yes, that is the word I was searching for—the word that lies like a hot iron in my heart! Was not the sky all full of it, and the leaves of the trees, the songs of the birds, the flowers that sprang from the earth, the wind sweeping through the branches, and even the voices of those white-robed prisoners beside me, singing in eternal adoration before the altar of God? Was it not the message of Love that floated into my cell through the open casement on nights when the moon hung pale in the skies? Was there not love in the notes of the flute on which the shepherd was piping in the valley beyond? Was not the breath of the lily we plucked for the Virgin’s altar Love mounting from the bowels of the earth?—Love which God had given to men to console them for being on earth! Was it not because of Love that I existed, out of Love that I had

been born? and was it not because of a Love that my father could not overcome that he had abandoned me to the mercy of others, sacrificed me when I was but a babe? and was it not Love that burned in my heart, tearing it away from the service to which it had been destined, from the prayers it was to pray?"

With a dry sob the man hid his face in Glava's lap. "And because of this white habit that I wear, because my father had loved too well, I was to be ever excluded from that great wonder that ruled the world—because of this uniform which I shared with others, the great unexplained mystery was to pass over my life like a strange and fearful blessing in which I should never have part. Gaetano, my mother had called me, but within my prison they had given me another name, and that name seemed to brand me a creature apart, shut away from the world of the living. Therefore will I not even tell thee what sound it had!

"I clung to prayer! I clung to music, I clung to the horrible fatigue with which flagellation had overwhelmed me, I clung to some impossible promise of recompense in a future better world. I clung to the Word of God and to the shadowy hopes which the holy brothers held out to me. But all seemed empty, a sounding vessel with no water from which I could drink—and no water with which I could quench the flames of Love that seemed to rise like a curse out of all that I touched, calling to me to flee my surroundings, to break the chains that were destroying me, to

seek other help, other voices—another faith! The old abbot became anxious. He must have seen the light of folly burning in my eyes. So for the first time he opened the doors of my prison and, pointing toward the horizon, he told me before what shrine I must go and do penance.

“For the first time in my life I was outside the convent-walls. Before me lay the long road, the road I had never trodden, the road which might lead anywhere—the road which others knew, but which ran along before me like a secret still to be discovered. The rains of Spring were washing the last snows of winter away; from beneath the melting slush, grass was sprouting, green as the hope that lies dormant in every heart. Above me the sky was blue, half veiled by clouds floating over it like wild swans winging toward their nests. The air filled my lungs, and the road ran on and on before me; my feet were covered with its mud. My thoughts were fixed upon the holy shrine whence hope was to come to me—hope and deliverance and peace.

But on the way another name, never before heard, floated suddenly toward me from the lips of passers-by: the name of Glava—Glava! . . . Like a mystic chant it followed my steps; it was a marvellous message mounting on all sides to greet the captive who had burst his bonds; an eternal verity it seemed, rising out of earth, falling from the skies, sounding out of the waters that rushed bubbling by. Glava! The name came to my heart as no name had ever

done. It was like a song of angels, like the cry of small children going toward joy, like a wondrous hymn of praise rising from every breast.

"I asked about thee: a river of praise was the answer—a river of many voices repeating the one same name—a river full of tears and sighs and love. So I turned my footsteps away from the road that I was to have trodden, toward the Voice on the Mountain. And now—I am here on my knees at thy feet.

"Glava, what message hast thou for the man who is desperate, for the man who, because of thee, is ready to break his vows, to deny his beliefs?"

"Were they beliefs?" asked Glava in a solemn voice. "But if it be the love of woman thou seekest, then must thou go to another place!"

"Thou deniest me every comfort, every hope, every help!" cried the man. "O Voice on the Mountain, thou wouldst cast me back into deadly darkness without a ray of light."

"I cast no one from me," said Glava softly "—no one. But rightly am I named the Voice on the Mountain. I am a voice, not a woman—and even my voice is but the echo of another voice, deeper and wiser than mine."

"Thou wouldst deny thy humanity?" cried the monk. "Thy glorious body wouldst thou deny? thy perfect limbs, thine eyes of light, thy crimson lips and that night-coloured hair that falls like a mantle down over thy back? and the name of Glava, that

wondrous name that cuts through darkness like a sword of light?"

"I am the Voice on the Mountain," said Glava, rising to her feet; "and those that come to me come to the healer, to the oracle, to the hand that comforts, to the ear that can listen, to the heart that understands—but they come not to a woman, for the woman does not exist!"

The man rose also, facing Glava, who, tall and wonderful, stood before him, superb in her unshaken strength.

"Thou art proud, O woman," said the monk, "and thou hast no mercy, for thy heart knows no conflict, thine eyes know nothing of the passion of love—but have a care, O Glava; thy hour may come! and then the Voice on the Mountain will have quite another sound!"

"Gaetano," answered Glava gently, "thou knowest not what thou sayest. Glava loves: Up there on the mountain-top some one lies awaiting her return, and it is because of that love that Glava is holy, for it is the passion of that heart that has given her tongue its wisdom and her hands their power. I turn not from thee in anger, for dearly do I wish to help thee in thy plight. But no earthly love can I give thee. It is not Glava that will help thee to break thy vows, and I know not what other desire thou hast!"

"Oh! give me something, something!" cried the man. "My life has been empty; I am but a prisoner

groping in the dark; no soft hand has ever touched my brow; I have been thirsty ever since I was a child. No mother has kissed me, no sister has been at my side, no woman's smile has rendered less arid my road. If I ask for all—for what thou canst not give—it is because I know not what it means! I cry for Love because its power seems to rule the earth. And because thou art marvellous, so all-knowing, so unlike others, I thought that some miracle would come to pass, and that with thy white hands thou wouldst lift the pain from my heart!”

Glava felt an immense pity for the man. Vaguely she realized how tremendous was his longing, how great his despair. Her clear eyes which knew nothing of conflict scanned his haggard face; a maternal desire to console him made her lips tremble, her eyes fill with tears. “There is too much longing in the world,” said Glava softly, “too great desire toward miracles that seldom come to pass. Daily do I read an immense grief in two eyes that I love. They dumbly question me, and I know not what answer they are craving. And now thine eyes seem also full of the same desire. Yet I have but one heart and one body, but two eyes and two hands!

“Kneel down here before me; let me press my lips to that brow that never has known a caress. Take this kiss with thee; let it be a blessing that will make less weary thy road. But ask not Glava to give thee what is not hers to give. And if a great unrest come again over thee, climb to the door of my dwelling.

Two wilt thou find there to greet thee—two instead of one. And if it be the Voice on the Mountain it is thy desire to hear, then come as a pilgrim, and Glava shall stand as is her wont, back to the sea, a helmet on her head and a sword in her hand. For only up there the Voice on the Mountain has its full power—up there near that other heart that awaits me, not here in this wilderness of clouds. . . .”

The white-robed stranger fell down before the woman of whom he had come so far in search. And, raising the desperate young face in both hands, gently, like a mother, Glava pressed her warm red lips to his brow. “Go in peace,” she murmured. “And when thou needest help, remember that yonder it can be given thee, yonder on the mountain-top.”

The man rose and stood staring at her, a wild light in his eyes, pressing his hand to the spot which she had kissed.

“It burns,” he said dreamily. “It burns, and yet it is as though for the first time I had drunk of an eternal source.” Then, rousing himself, he picked up his staff. “I shall come again, Glava,” he cried. “Verily I shall come again!” And like a restless spirit driven by some nameless fear he rushed from her, the clouds closing over him like shapeless monsters devouring a prey.

Glava stood quite motionless. Her spear had fallen to the ground. An immense silence encompassed her—a silence that seemed to descend from the skies, mingling with another silence that rose out

of the ground. Glava's hands were folded. As one who sees something which she cannot understand, she stared at the crimson traces which the monk's feet had marked on the snow.

VII

*We raise our hands to the void for things
beyond hope.*

Tagore.

“A T last.”

It was Gorromó's voice that cried out the words. Like a sob they came from his lips, for to him it seemed that he had waited a life-time for the sound of her step. Glava stood in the doorway spear in hand. A gust of wind entered with her into the house.

“Thou art like a flower that has bloomed in the early morn,” cried the man. “Thou art all covered with dew!”

“The mists have wept over me,” laughed Glava; “they have tried to blind me, to hide my road and make me lose my path; like roving spirits they have endeavoured to lead me astray!” With her bounding step she came over the floor and, bending toward her lover, kissed him on the brow.

In truth the mist shone in tiny diamonds all over her; her hair was covered with them, and the air she brought with her was the inebriating breath of the wilds.

“When thou bendest thus over me,” whispered the

man, "it is as though God's vast creation had gathered round thee, making thee a creature apart!"

"Did the time seem long to thee without me?" enquired Glava tenderly, smoothing the hair away from his brow. "Thou art pale, my Gorromomo: has the pain been upon thee very sore?"

"The minutes are weighted when thou art far," answered Gorromomo. "Each one seems to turn into an hour invented for my special despair."

"Hast thou been in pain, Gorromomo?" asked Glava again.

"Yes," said Gorromomo simply. "I am always in pain when thou art not here!"

Glava sighed. "Gorromomo," she said, "I believe that with thee the torture of the brain could deaden any physical pain."

"My body is a thing of the past," said Gorromomo sadly. "My legs are two blocks of ice; they might even be two tomb-stones marking the place where they lie dead. Any pain I may feel flows to my heart. It is here in my breast that I suffer, nor do I know if my suffering is of the body or of the mind."

"But let us not speak of things that sadden us, Glava, for has not all the joy of the world entered with thee into the house? Where hast thou been, O my Glava? Thou hast brought back within the folds of thy clothes the smell of infinite spaces, the good smell of earth."

"Yes," said Glava, "although the snow is still deep

in many places, one feels that the breath of Spring is passing over the world. Down in the valleys the green grass is already sprouting along the sides of the roads."

"Are thine eyes so piercing that thou canst see right down into the valleys beneath?"

"No," said Glava, "but I met a wanderer who had come from far."

"A wanderer here in thy world of stone?"

"Yes, a wanderer," repeated Glava; "a wanderer whose eyes were haunted and whose words were strange; a man such as never before have I seen."

"An old man?" asked Gorromomo.

"No, young he was," answered Glava; "young, and his eyes had a hungry light."

"Where was he going?" asked Gorromomo.

"He was going nowhere: he was searching for the Voice on the Mountain," said Glava; "he was searching for me."

"For thee!" An expression of anxiety came over Gorromomo's face. "For thee! and how did he find thee?"

"He said that many voices had indicated the road to him."

"The road to thee—yes, many know it," said Gorromomo slowly. "But generally they come at another season."

"His feet were bleeding," said Glava. "Never before had they walked upon open roads."

"What dost thou mean, Glava. Thy voice is

strange, a shadow seems to have fallen over thee. Wert thou perchance afraid?"

Glava did not laugh at this question as Gorromomo had expected, but going up to the fire she put her foot on the hearth, extending her hands toward the flame. "I was not afraid," she answered quietly. "But the strange look in his eyes has remained like a weight on my soul."

"Who was he?" The sound of anxiety deepened in Gorromomo's voice.

"A monk," said Glava. "A monk all clad in white."

"A monk?"

"Yes; and it was the first time he had quitted his monastery—the first time since his father had left him there as a babe."

"He told thee his story?"

"Yes and no," said Glava. "He spoke of the great unrest that had sent him forth."

"And what was that unrest?"

"He was not quite sure what it was. At first he thought that perchance it might be the desire for peace, for the peace he had not found in prayer; but then he realised that it was only the desire—"

"The desire of what?" asked Gorromomo breathlessly.

"The desire of Love."

"And it was therefore he came to thee? to thee!" cried Gorromomo.

"He was going elsewhere—to some holy shrine—but the sound of my name met him on the way, and

so he turned his steps toward the heights. And he found me amongst the clouds. He came upon me very suddenly, right out of a ray of light."

"Was he beautiful?" asked Gorromó, his hands gripping the rug that covered his couch.

"I hardly remember his features," said Glava. "I only remember the immense distress in his eyes."

"Were they in greater distress than mine?" The words seemed wrung from Gorromó's lips.

Glava suddenly turned round and looked at him. Then with a quick movement she was on her knees at his side. "What is it, Gorromó? Art thou in pain? Speak, Gorromó. What ails thee?"

"Nothing!" said Gorromó, "nothing. I was only afraid—so afraid—"

"Afraid of what?" asked Glava, laying her hand on his brow.

"Of shadows, of life, of the unknown, of shapes that rise suddenly out of space—I am afraid of to-morrow—I am afraid of the Spring—of any strange step that may come into our lives. . . ."

"Gorromó, why is there so much pain in the eyes of men? My heart is so wide—generally I feel so happy, as though I could lift worlds and touch the clouds with my hands. But when I look downward, then I see eyes about me filled with fear, filled with longing, with desires which I do not understand. When they come in crowds it is different; then I can bear them, because it is like a wide wave rolling toward my heart, and pity rises in me like an isolated

thing that I can give them. But this man's eyes seemed to ask for something I could not give—something that belonged to my inner self. And yet I longed to help him. It was as though through his look hundreds were crying to me for food, for rest, for peace—for love.”

Gorromomo was feverishly pressing Glava's hand between both his own. His eyes also had the look of which she spoke. She gazed into them as though trying to unravel some mystery.

“Yes,” continued Glava, “men seem striving toward impossible dreams, always straining after something that passes them by, something they cannot grasp—something that perchance belongs not to earth. They do not seem to enjoy the sunshine, the flowers, the sound of the wind passing amongst leaves, the marvellous blue of the sky and the good smell of the earth, the glorious fresh air that fills their lungs. They must needs turn to their neighbours, looking down instead of up, till they themselves become sad because of all that they see!”

Gorromomo sighed. “Thou art a child of nature, Glava,” he said. “No polluted air has ever touched thy beauty; no strife for life, no desire toward the possessions of others has marked any lines on thy face—no, not even any conflict of soul.”

“Thou speakest truly,” said Glava; “ever have I lived alone.”

“Thou has grown up straight toward the sun as a flower grows, opening its petals only to heavenly

light; the dust of high roads has never soiled the hem of thy garment. Glava, thou hast been happy."

"Yes, I have been happy," said Glava thoughtfully. "Yet, for several years already, a strange unrest has sent me forth, seeking for I know not what."

"That is why the legend has spread abroad that thou art at times driven from thy dwelling by some nameless woe."

"It is not woe," said Glava. "It is more like a great longing that must end in joy."

"Things end generally in pain, Glava! in pain, not in joy."

"Why should it be so, O Gorromomo? Is not light stronger than shade and joy greater than sorrow?"

"The end of all earthly things is pain, Glava! Flowers fade as the bloom fades from the cheeks of youth; hopes fall to pieces; and man cannot cling to a happiness that he leaves behind him. The greatest joy is oft but a passing light in the midst of much darkness. Maybe the real light lies beyond the gates of this life, but our human eyes are too weak to perceive it!"

"I believe in joy," said Glava simply, "for this world is too beautiful, and too true the heart in which I trust." And tenderly the girl laid her lips upon the helpless man's hand.

"And does a doubt never cross thy mind?" asked

Gorromo. "Does no fear or apprehension ever darken thy soul?"

"No," said Glava. Then she added in a lower voice: "But the eyes of that man who came through the clouds have made me wonder—"

"Tell me more about him," said Gorromo. "I want to know what he asked of thee and what thy answer was."

"He knew not himself what he wanted, and yet he felt as though I could give it to him—as though I could still his longing and quench his thirst. The folds of my gown did he wet with his tears. They were burning hot like cinders falling from a furnace. He said that never had the shadow of a woman crossed his road, that never had a woman's voice, even that of a mother or of a sister, gladdened his ear; that he had been as a wretched prisoner groping for light."

"And thou—what didst thou answer him? Glava, what answer didst thou give?"

"I answered him that I was the Voice on the Mountain, and that up here in this dwelling there were two who could help him instead of one; I told him that I was only a helper, an oracle, a voice that was but the echo of another voice that I loved."

"Thou didst tell him that, Glava—only that? And thou gavest him nothing, Glava?"

"No, nothing! nothing but a kiss on his brow."

"And thou callest that nothing!" cried the man on the couch.

"Ask not of a woman," said Glava, "to see sorrow and not to stretch out a hand."

Gorromomo was silent. Only the sound of the crackling fire filled the room.

"Will he come again?" whispered Gorromomo hoarsely, after a while.

"It may be that he will come again," was Glava's reply. Then, bending over the man, whose voice seemed heavy with unshed tears: "Gorromomo," she said, "of what art thou afraid? I give thee my life, my love, my faith, my trust: what more can I give thee?"

"Thou canst not give me the morrow," cried the man with a dry sob. "Thou canst not promise me the flower that one day may bloom for thee alone!"

Glava's eyes filled suddenly with a great anxiety that made them large and luminous like those of a child. "Art thou worse, Gorromomo?" she cried. "Is thy pain harder to bear? Oh! tell me. Do not hide anything from me. Tell me, art thou worse?"

"It was not of the death of the body that I was thinking," said Gorromomo sadly. "That death were peace, that death were but the opening of an unknown door unto unknown shores. No, Glava, it was of another death that I was thinking—of one that is slower and more cruel—the death of all that means light to my soul!"

"I do not understand," said Glava.

"No, thou canst not be expected to understand! And I have no right to darken thy life and to cast a

shadow over thy days. My maimed body cannot entirely comprehend thy gladness, as thy unshaken strength cannot quite seize the sorrow that lies like a veil between me and all I see. Forgive me, my Glava! Leave thy hand in mine. Then I shall overcome the world even from my couch. With the help of thy love I shall lift my soul above bodily suffering; through thine eyes shall I look at the glories of the sun and enjoy the awakening ecstasies of newborn seasons; and if thy mysterious monk knock at our door, we shall let him in and we shall wash his bleeding feet and lay the balm of our love upon the wounds of his heart.

“Forget my words, Glava, for I would not see thee with a shade of sorrow in thine eyes. Let sorrow be mine, but all the joy of the earth would I lay round thy forehead like a crown of light!”

Glava stood beside him with a smile on her lips. “Be not afraid of the morrow, Gorromó. See, the snows are melting, and soon the voices of spring will spread like heavenly harmonies over the earth.”

“It is of the voices of spring that I am afraid,” sighed Gorromó. “But the thought shall be put from me. Now wilt thou not call Volona to bring us our evening repast? See, the dusk is already creeping toward us, filling our chamber with shade. Go, my Glava—and, because I love thee, go and deck thy wondrous body with the golden robe I gave thee once. My eyes would feast upon thy beauty; I want to keep thy picture like a shining light in my

eyes. This day is still mine, and I shall hold it—hold it with my two useless hands!”

And Glava did as she was bidden, leaving Gorromomo alone in the vast chamber; alone with the crackling fire on the hearth. Lurid lights passed over his face, and difficult it had been to say if it were tears shining in his eyes or only the reflection of the light. Shadows played over the wall, larger or smaller according to the size of the flames. But Gorromomo lay quite still, staring into space, with the name of Glava on his lips—that name which had turned the monk from his road, which little children were calling, toward which the hopeless were flocking, in which the desolate believed; that name which like blessing was passing in every breeze over the awakening earth.

Yes, the name of Glava was on Gorromomo's lips.

VIII

*How far does my life reach and where
does night begin?*

Rainer Maria Rilke.

I N Glava's small chamber many tapers had been lighted, as though for a feast. Glava stood in the middle of the floor whilst old Volona fussed around her, decking her mistress' beauty with the sumptuous robe which Gorromomo had desired her to wear. Like long lines of light the precious tissues flowed down her body, making her appear even taller than usual, giving her the strange semblance of a holy figure robed for a procession amidst fanatic crowds. Glava stood quite still, a smile on her lips, whilst the old servant fastened here a clasp and there a string, bending to the ground so as to spread out the shining folds, rising again to smooth with her fingers the glorious fabric which her rough hands seemed to touch with delight.

"Sure and no wonder it is," she murmured, "that the man adores thee more than his life. Thou resemblest no other woman upon earth; I am thinking alone thou standest, a thing apart. A pity it is that thou canst not see thyself, for indeed thou art a sight for the saints."

"Why should I not be beautiful?" laughed Glava,

lifting her arms above her head. "Are not the flowers beautiful, and the sky and the sea and the rocks and the trees? Beauty is in all things that grow, even in the humblest weed that takes root amongst stones. And am I not also a growth of the wilds? are not these mountains my home? Have I ever been afraid of storm, sun, or snow? Have I not grown tall and strong like the fir-tree that springs out of the rock?"

"And it will not be every woman that has beauty," muttered Volona, shaking her head.

"But my mother was beautiful, was she not, Volona?" asked Glava, taking the old woman's hand.

"Ay, ay, it was beautiful she was," said the old servant beneath her breath.

"I wish I had known her," sighed Glava.

"Ay, ay, it was beautiful she was," repeated the woman. "But not as beautiful as thou art. I am thinking the world had kissed her, and with it the old sorrow of Eve."

"And my father?" asked Glava.

"Man does not always pause to pluck the seed he has sown," was the enigmatic answer.

"Terribly close are thy lips, Volona, when thou wilt not speak!"

"A word once spoken flies abroad like an insect with many wings," said Volona. "And better it is, I am thinking, never to let it be born than that it should fly whither it should not go at all, at all."

"Is then the secret of my birth a thing of shame?"

“Nay, nay,” grumbled the woman. “But weary me not with useless questions, my child; it is old I am, and one thing at a time is enough for me. Let me deck thy beauty worthily, so as to give joy to the sad man who awaits thee below. Let good alone—rejoice over thy strength, thy health, and thy beauty; rejoice over the love that fills this house. Clouds will be floating over the sky at times, but thine eyes, thank God, can generally perceive the sun that will be hiding behind them.

“Dear me! dear me, and a grand thing it will be, this golden stuff that my good Lord Gorrommo has given to his Lady; I am knowing that. He had it brought from a far-off land so as to enhance the beauty of the mountain maiden.”

“Unlike Glava, is it not,” laughed the girl, “this trailing of golden gowns over the simple floors? The wild huntress of yore knew naught of such finery, nor would I care to be often thus clad. More at ease am I in my simple attire, spear in hand. But what would I not do for Gorrommo—for Gorrommo, who is so sad—?”

Furtively the old servant watched the girl’s face as she spoke. “And it is not only with his heart that he will be loving thee,” she said, “but also with his soul and with his life.”

“Yes,” said Glava dreamily, “it is as though some fibre of his being had taken root within me, so that if I move away from him I seem to be tearing something up. Is it always thus that men love, Volona?”

"Dear me, no!" cried the old woman, clasping her hands. "Mostly they love too little; but meseems this man will be loving too much!"

"Too much?"

"And will he not be wearying thee sometimes with his over-great longing?"

"I love him; therefore he cannot weary me. I love him so that no sacrifice can be too great!"

"Ah! but it is of sacrifice that thou wilt be speaking," said Volona. "When love is complete, nothing is sacrifice, I am thinking. It is just one long giving and receiving that it is, neither knowing who gives nor who receives; it is all blended together into a holy light."

Glava was silent. She stood staring at her own broken reflection in the small panes of glass. "The world is very large," she said at last, "and this house is but small. Before Gorrommo came into my life all my joy lay beyond; like a creature of the wilds did I roam from place to place. But with Gorrommo's coming it was the small house that became large like a cathedral, because of the love that lies therein; and the world outside it was that had shrunk."

"Rightly wilt thou be saying 'that lies therein'! Otherwise it were if he could stand at thy side."

"Hast thou forgotten, Volona," said Glava almost sternly, "that it is because of me that Gorrommo lies there crippled, his life broken in two?"

"And sure thou didst need to see him broken in

two, before thou couldst love him!" scolded the old woman as she would have scolded a child.

"What did I know of life then, Volona?"

"And what is it thou art knowing of it now?"

"Volona, for shame! I do not understand thee."

"Tut, tut!" said the old woman, "thou lookest at life through the glass Gorromomo will be putting before thine eyes; and, because of thy great pity for his misfortune, it is to love him eternally thou wilt be vowing, although he be but two eyes that stare at thee out of a world of pain. Tut, tut! what wilt thou be knowing of love?"

"Volona, of what art thou speaking?"

"I am speaking of what I know," said Volona, "It is under the spell of that sad man's eyes that thou art, and because of the great need he has of thee he will be filling thy soul with a mystical perfection which is not really thine!"

"Volona!" cried Glava, half in laughter half in anger, "what dost thou presume to say?"

"And it is what I know that I be saying," repeated Volona. "Didst thou ever have power of healing before my lord Gorromomo lay in the house? Was thy tongue ever so wise, or thy hands so gentle, or thy words so powerful, before he loved thee? Or am I alone remembering the wild huntress of yore?"

Glava was silent a while; she had clasped her hands together, and her eyes had a far-away look. "How dark it was that night," she murmured, "how dark! And I was so full of joy! I had already met the

handsome stranger the day before, and always had he pursued me on his beautiful steed—but my Focco could outrun it, because he is accustomed to our mountain paths.”

Glava paused a while; then, reassuming her tale, she said almost in a whisper. “But never shall I forget the sound when they fell—fell like a tree that the storm hurls into space. . . . A miracle it was that Gorrommo was not killed. But his beautiful stallion lay beneath him with broken back, its eyes still wide open, but—the light out of them was gone. . . . Oh! how I screamed there, all alone amongst those rocks. Never had I raised my powerful voice to such a pitch! I could not lift the great man, in spite of the strength of which I was so proud; so I called and called as never had I called and never shall I call again. Meseems that since that night my voice has another sound.”

Again Glava was silent a while; then she continued, still in a low voice: “What hours those were, alone in the dark, not knowing if the man were alive or dead! His head lay on my knees, and he was quite still—quite still—and morning crept slowly, oh! so slowly, over the earth. When light came at last my eyes seemed to open to another life—a changed life. Pain had suddenly entered my world; then it was that I saw the wide-open lightless eyes of the beautiful horse—”

“Ay, ay!” grumbled the old servant, “and it is too often already thou wilt be describing me the scene;

today meseems thou wast not sure then if most thou wast regretting the man or the horse!"

"Volona!" cried Glava in an indignant voice.

"Sure I am knowing what I say," continued the woman. "Man meant very little to thee in those days, whilst Focco was a creature apart, thy friend and companion on every road. Well, well, but it all changed; it was changed from that day when my Lord Gorrommo was brought up here to our house."

"I wanted to be wedded to him then and there," said Glava, looking straight before her.

"Yes, but, thank God, it will be too noble that this soul was, to agree to such a crime. He would not be accepting such a sacrifice. And it is right he was. For can one be binding a living bit of nature, made out of fire and storm, sun and joy blended together into woman's shape—be binding it to a—?"

"Be still, Volona! I will not hear thee say it! It cuts me like a knife! Thou knowest all that Gorrommo has given me: am I not another being? does not a strange new power flow through my blood? Has not his love made of me a woman, whilst till that day I but a half-tamed creature without either heart or brain? And since then his love has been unchangeable. No call from his former life could lure him back to the plains. One messenger after another did he send away without listening to their prayers. For four years has he been here with me on this mountain top!"

“Ay, ay, and it is pretty enough that it sounds, no doubt, and my Lord Gorrommo will be loving thee too well,” said the harsh old voice. “But it is not my opinion that will be changing. A woman he has made of thee—more’s the pity, I am thinking, because I declare, for one, that all thy new-found perfection will be but the reflection of his love. The wild huntress of yore will be lying beneath it with all her former fierceness, and it is ready to awake it is, when the hour will strike!”

“Thou has no love for Gorrommo!” said Glava in a pained voice.

“What has an old hag to do with love at all, at all?” grumbled Volona. “Sure, my eyes, though dimmed, will be seeing clearer than thine. It is a saint my Lord Gorrommo is; his words will be more beautiful than those inscribed in the Holy Book. But he is a saint who will be lying on his back—and not only dost thou stand upright, but a long future it is that lies before thee, and thou hast wild-running blood in thy veins. But enough talk. Sit thee down on yonder stool: I want to wind thy plaits round thy brow, so as to make thee like unto a queen with a crown on her head.” Old Volona laughed, but there was not much mirth in the sound.

“I am happy,” said Glava, as though in protest against some unspoken thought. “I tell thee I am happy and that I need nothing else!”

“Life will not always be waiting till we ask,” was the strange reply that she got. Then it was Glava

who laughed; and such a ring of joy was in her voice that the sad man in the room beyond heard it and pressed his hands to his heart.

“Give me my sword!” cried Glava, “for without my sword I am only half myself!” And again she laughed.

Then the door between the two rooms was opened, and Glava stood before Gorromo, a shining shimmering miracle of gold, with a naked blade in her hand.

“Glava, I love thee!” was all he found to say; and his arms were held out to her with the gesture of one meeting his Fate.

Glava went over the floor toward him, the folds of her marvellous attire following her like a light. But on the threshold stood Volona shaking her head. Then, turning, she left them, closing the door very softly so as not to remind the man and the woman that the world was waiting outside.

IX

*Even the stars could I gather within me,
so over-large feels my heart.*

Rainer Maria Rilke.

GLAVA was singing. Her wondrous voice filled the large chamber with waves of sound. The fire had fallen to ashes; a smouldering glow alone marked the hearth as with a streak of flaming blood. The moonlight streamed in through the broad uncurtained window, painting a pool of silver on the shadowy floor. Glava stood in the square of mystical radiance; her golden robe had become white beneath the bleaching rays; round her brow the heavy plaits laid a sombre shadow. Her two hands were clasped on the hilt of her beloved sword, which shone along her body like a line of frost.

Near the dying embers sat Volona spinning. As fine as a cobweb was the thread that slipped through her fingers, and her wheel whizzed softly like the buzzing of many bees. But Gorrommo lay quite still on his couch, watching the love of his heart. His eyes seemed two holes marring the paleness of his face. From time to time Volona would lift her head, casting guarded glances from the man to the girl, but no hasty movement ever snapped her thread.

Strange were Glava's songs. A wild throb passed

through them like the pulsing of blood in fevered veins, like the sobbing of tired winds that cannot rise to full storm, like the beating of captive hands against unrelenting doors, like the dull swell of dead seas over hidden graves. A sound of Fate rang through Glava's every song, and curious it was that a maiden whose whole nature was but one cry of joy should instinctively choose words so sad and gloomy:

I have heard the sea-wind sighing
Where the dune grasses grow;
The sighing of the dying,
Where the salt-tides flow.

For where the salt-tides flow
The sullen dead are lifting
Tired arms, and to and fro
Are idly drifting.

So through the grey dune-grasses
Not the wind only cries,
But the dim sea-wrought Shadow
Breathes drowned sighs.

Suddenly her voice broke off, and in quite another key she began again:

I hear the sea-song of the blood in my heart,
I hear the sea-song of the blood in my ears:
And I am far apart
And lost in years.

Is then this wildering sea-song a part
Of the song of mystery of the years—
Or only the echo of the tired heart
And of tears?

Then, quite unexpected, Glava laughed that rather wild laugh that always made Gorromo's heart stand still. She lifted her sword in both hands. The beautiful voice took up once more:

Out of the wild hills I am hearing a voice, Oho! oho!
And I am thinking it is a voice of a bleeding sword:
Whose is that sword? I know it well; it is the sword
of the Slayer, oho! oho!
Him that is called Death; and the song that he sings
I know;
Oho! oho! oho!

Out of the cold greyness of the sea I am hearing, oho! oho!
I am hearing a wave-muffled voice, as of one who
drowns in the depths; oho! oho!
Whose is that voice? I know it well: it is the voice of
the Shadow—
Him that is called Death; and the song that he sings
I know.
Oho! oho! oho!

Upright stood the maiden, all white in the moon-sick radiance. Above her head the sword flashed about like a phantom light. Only she and her weapon were luminous in the dim dark chamber, like a beloved vision come from a land of ancient lore;

like a bodiless spirit that might dissolve into mist if human voice were suddenly to sound. Out of the dark Gorromó and Volóna watched her, holding their breath.

Then again her voice changed, becoming soft; and like the sigh of far-off tides she sang:

In the sunken city of Murias
A golden image dwells:
The sea-song of trampling waves
Is as muffled bells
Where he dwells
In the city of Murias.

In the sunken city of Murias
Long, oh! so long ago,
Our souls were wed when the world was young.
Are we old now, that we know
This silent woe
In the city of Murias?

Even softer became Glava's voice when she sang this last stanza:

In the sunken city of Murias
A graven Image dwells:
The sound of our little sobbing prayer
Is as muffled bells
Where he dwells
In the city of Murias.

"I love that song," said Glava when she had fin-

ished. "I see the graven image sitting there beneath the ever-restless tides that pass over it, unaware of what they are covering; sometimes they are green, sometimes blue, sometimes black and stormy like the heart of hate; but the image sits smiling in its eternal grave.

"What sort of image is it?" asked Gorromo's voice.

"A strange image," said Glava, "with a smile on its face. It smiles because it knows things that the seas have never learnt."

"What things?"

"Things that went down with the city when it sunk beneath the waters—old songs and old loves and old hates. All unwittingly the voice of the sea has become an echo of those voices that lie submerged in fathomless depths. Sometimes I imagine that the city of Murias lies here drowned beneath my rocks."

"Whence hast thou that thought?" queried Gorromo.

"It is to me as though some old echo from other ages had whispered the song into my heart. For there are four cities that lie beneath the sea: Gorias, that is in the East; Finias, that is in the South; Murias, that is in the West; and Falias, that is in the North; and no eye can see them more. Once they were glorious, and lovers sauntered hand in hand down their streets; but now they are forgotten, and no one knows where they lie—no, not even I."

"Why are all thy songs so sad?" asked Gorromo.

"They are so unlike the joy that lives in each drop of thy blood."

"She was cradled to the sound of those songs, I am thinking," said Volona from where she sat. Her harsh old voice seemed to come from very far, from somewhere right out of the past. "The sea, the wind, and the throb of a tired heart, I am thinking, were the sounds she will have heard as a babe. There is a song I am knowing that once her mother sang as she cradled her close to her heart; a song that has not been sung for many a year. Forgive an old woman if she will be lifting her weary voice; but the moonlight, maybe, or this dead-still hour of night, will be putting the words into my mouth. Listen, ye two young ones, for verily it will be a voice from out of the grave coming back to your hearts." And the gaunt old woman began to chant, an echo of lost beauty ringing through her once fine voice:

Oh! bonnie birdeen,
Sweet bird of my heart,
Tell me, my dear one,
How shall we part?

He calls me, he cries
Who father is to thee;
Oh! birdeen, his eyes
In those blue eyes I see.

Thou art wrought of our love,
Of our joy that was slain—

My birdeen, my dove,
My passion, my pain.

The old woman's voice swelled suddenly with a curious force through the room; it was like a sombre wave dashing its waters in a death-cry against a rock.

With a feeling akin to awe the other two listened. Moving out of the moonlight, Glava entered the shade where the strange being sat invisible, and, going up to her, she put her arms about her. "Thou hast kept an echo of my mother's voice," she said almost unconsciously.

"And it may be that some echoes never die," was all the old woman said.

"I do not remember those words," said Glava.

"Perchance they will only have remained in my heart," murmured Volona.

"'Oh! bonnie birdeen! sweet bird of my heart!' how sweet it sounds!" said Glava, taking up the song in her glorious young voice:

Thou art wrought of our love,
Of our joy that was slain—
My birdeen, my dove,
My passion, my pain.

The whole room vibrated again with the notes that rose like a cry of undying love through the dark.

"Come here," cried Gorrommo suddenly. "I must touch thee, feel thy hand! or my heart will stand still.

The shadow is too dense: I cannot see thee. I am afraid."

Glava ran toward him. "The moon-spell has got into our blood," she said; "we all of us feel as though ghosts were hovering around us. Here I am, and, as thou feelest, verily no ghost!" And, bending down, the beautiful woman kissed Gorromo on the lips.

A strange sound came from the dark corner where Volona sat. Was it a groan or was it only the sound of the wind? Who can tell? Neither Glava nor Gorromo heard it; at that moment their souls were too near.

"Sure thou canst also be singing songs such as other maidens sing," came the old voice from the chimney corner; "songs of love."

Glava raised her head. "Then put fresh logs on the fire," she said. "Let its gleaming glow chase the pale moon away; she has brought the spirit-world too near."

"Lay thy sword down," said Volona. "Other maidens would not be singing love-songs with swords in their hands."

Glava laughed her glorious laugh, in which all the joy of the earth seemed to have flowed together. "Build up the fire," she cried; "let it flame and flare. But leave me my sword. I shall sing the song thou desirest, but I am not as other maidens. I am Glava!—the woman that Gorromo loves." And, moving into the middle of the chamber, she stood

there tall and splendid in her golden gown, whilst fresh flames bursting from the fire enhanced the strangeness of her beauty. Then she threw back her head, and a song rose from her throat, filling the room, rolling round the rafters like a call of spring:

I told you that sorrow would fade, love,
And you would forget half your pain;
That the sweet bird of song would waken ere long
And sing in our bosom again;
That hope would creep out of the shadows
And back to its nest in your heart,
And gladness would come and find its old home
And that sorrow at length would depart.
I told you that grief seldom killed, love,
Though the heart might seem dead for a while.
But the world is so bright and so full of warm light
That 'twould waken at length in its smile. . . .

Glava broke off. "Some say that this is the end of the song," she said suddenly, "and that Love cannot last. Listen!" And in a different key she took up the words:

The river that rolls between us
Can never be crossed, I know,
For the waters are deep, and the shores are steep,
And the maelstrom whirls below!

"And what is it thou art knowing about how a song should end?" cried Volona harshly. "Who

could have been putting such thoughts into thy soul? I am not knowing what songs can reach thee up here but those that old Volona sang to thee in our solitude!"

"Thou wast not always old, Volona," laughed Glava lightly, "Verily thou wast not born with the frost on thy head."

The old woman lifted her strange sunken eyes, and the look she gave Glava seemed to come from other days. "Thy words will be dancing lightly over me," said the servant, "but I am knowing that the truth of thy saying is nothing to thee. To thy mind, in spite of thy words, the snow on my head will be a weight that always was there; neither will youth be caring what will have been the storms that blanched our hair and froze the blood in our veins!"

A sudden and curious revolt seemed to rise from the heart of the old woman as she looked at the splendid being before her. Some old sorrow was bubbling to the surface from beneath what had seemed to be waters stilled forever. An unknown sensation of awe crept over Glava, an almost gruesome realization of having lived beside depths never fathomed. She stood motionless in the middle of the chamber, her head turned toward the corner where her old friend sat spinning; and the feeling that she was looking at a stranger stole shuddering into her heart.

Volona answered her gaze without any fear; her eyes seemed to burn their sockets. "When the feet

of youth," continued the old woman as one who awakes from an over-long sleep, "tread over cinders, they are never remembering that a fire has burnt there once, or that the greyness over which they will be passing is the grave of a leaping flame. To them it is only dust, as lifeless as the furrows that will be marked upon faded faces at which they hardly look. Thou wilt be awakening at dawn, O Glava, like a rose-bud opening to the rays of the sun, and when thou steppest out into their radiance thou wilt be thinking for sure that their glory was invented for thee alone. Yet we too have our spring-time, I am thinking; we too a dawn to our day!"

"Have I perchance been selfish?" asked Glava with the voice of a child.

"Will the fruit-tree be selfish because in April its branches cover over and over with blossoms, or will it be responsible for the cold ashes that will be staring at its beauty from off the ground? Nay, nay, child, thus is the law of nature, and thus must it be—each heart will have its day, longer or shorter according to the decree of Fate.

"But rightly art thou saying, sure the moonlight has stolen into our blood. Then those old songs, they will be coming out of the past like stealthy fingers knocking at the door of my heart. But I am knowing that in each woman the eternal mother lies dormant, and in hours like these the snow of old age for sure will not be hindering nature from awakening with a cry, to demand the things that have

been eternally denied her. Now let me be rising from my corner to bring you the cakes I made for you both a short while ago." And the strange old being left her seat by the fire-side and silently went away.

Glava went over to Gorromomo and slipped her fingers into his. "Always again I feel," she cried, "that this old world is too full of voices—voices calling out of the future and voices calling out of the past. The first can hardly be resisted, and the last cannot be denied! Gorromomo, Gorromomo! is it our souls that torment us? for surely man was made to be happy and glad!" Opening wide her arms, Glava made a gesture as though she would clasp the world to her heart. "I feel so young, so strong, so loving! My bosom heaves like great waves that want to rise higher and higher till they could reach the skies; my hands feel so eager that meseems I could tear the stars from the heavens; and my heart is so large that I am sure it could become a home for every longing, a haven for every hope. My eyes are so powerful that they feel they could reach any distance, pierce any darkness, see through any curtain, absorbing every beauty, taking possession of each joy! Gorromomo, Gorromomo, speak to me! tell me something, or I feel that my heart will burst!"

But Gorromomo could say nothing. He only stared at her, his soul in his eyes.

The moon-rays from which she had escaped had stolen after her over the floor and were creeping like

caressing fingers over her body, hiding amongst the folds of her garment, sliding up her arms, laying themselves above her bosom, kissing with pale lips the waves of her hair, filling her pupils with phantasmal light. Once more she stood revealed to her lover, a vision risen from other worlds.

His tongue felt heavy with the many words of endearment he longed to cry out, his soul was oppressed by the desire to make her realise the incommensurable strength of his love, his hands trembled with the yearning to touch her, to hold her, to chain her to his life. But nothing did he say. He knew that no words could tell her what he really felt. Dumb was the man before her beauty, as the worshipper is dumb before the face of his God. And it was to Gorromó, as he contemplated with ecstasy her silver-flooded figure, as though through the large closed windows many other faces were staring at her—pale faces, hungry faces with covetous eyes—and as though greedy hands were extended toward her so as to tear her away from his side. And amongst the rest he thought he could see the ghostly face of a white-robed monk whose feet had left bleeding marks on the ground. A nameless anguish rose like a great flood to the lover's heart, a flood that he felt must certainly one day break in upon it, extinguishing the flame by which he lived.

But Glava's face was turned toward him; and in her eyes shone the faith of a child.

X

*'A darkened casement in a darker room
Was all his home, whence weary and
bowed and white
He watched across the slowly gathering
gloom
The slowly westering light.*

Alfred Noyes.

THE voices of spring were calling, calling. The stone house on the mountain was full of their clamour. They came from the valleys beyond, they came from the skies above, they mounted from the great blue sea that spread its enigmatic immensity beneath Glava's much-loved rocks. Like a far-off chorus singing songs of exultation, they echoed through the mountain maiden's chamber, bringing her a message of hope and love. Like a whispered warning they penetrated through the curtain which old Volona had drawn over her window to shut out the day.

But through Gorromo's restless slumbers they throbbed like the beating of an enormous drum, filling the world with a sound of advancing Fate; a sound so overpowering that, as he awakened suddenly from sleep, the name of Glava burst like a cry from his lips. Oh! but what was it that he heard? Was

it not the noise of galloping hoofs? Yes, this was reality, this was no dream: it was the sound of Focco's irons ringing on stone—the sound of Glava galloping away from the house—of Glava, whose wild-leaping blood was following the call of spring. And there lay the man who loved her, bound and fettered to his couch. He could not even rise so as to gaze after her as she stormed away without having left the blessing of her kiss on his brow.

“Glava,” he cried, “mighty indeed must have been thy unrest this morning, or thou wouldst not have gone from me thus, without awaiting my greeting yonder in our room. For well thou knowest, Glava, what anguish brings a day that begins without thee—a long, long day, wearily waiting thy return.” He clasped his hands over his burning eyes. A prayer that was more like a groan wrung itself from the lonely man's breast.

But Glava did not hear it. Something wilder than love and stronger than pity was racing in her blood—something that filled her young veins with the irresistible impulse of flight. She wanted to belong to no one, to feel no fetters, no law, no boundaries; she wanted to be one with the breezes that blew, one with the sun that shone, to be but a part of the sap that was rising in every plant; to mingle the overbubbling joy of her soul with the extraordinary ecstasy that was spreading like magic over the awakening earth.

Glava sat her stallion like a wild Amazon, needing neither stirrup nor saddle. A leopard's skin only

was strapped on the grand creature's back. Over rocky roads and perilous passes flew Glava, spear in hand; woman and horse seemed grown together, and it was as though the same exultation were leading them forward toward any adventure, away from any sadness, into the very heart of life. Equal was their strength, and neither rider nor steed admitted any hindrance, heeded any danger, felt any fear. Their advance might have been likened unto a sunlit storm whirling through space! Like flickering flames the stallion's mane floated in the breeze; with the movement of a wind-driven wave its tail swept over the ground; wide open were its nostrils, and from its dilated pupils sparks seemed flying as they flew from under its hoofs. The girl's long tresses, which had escaped from beneath her fur cap, followed her closely like a dense dark cloud; her eyes were full of light; a wild laugh escaped her lips, mingling with the songs of the birds that flew after her as though endeavouring to overtake this vision of joy that was hurrying over the earth. The sky and the trees, the clouds and the sun, were in harmony with the girl's singing heart. They greeted her as their own, they welcomed her advance, they called her, they whispered secrets into her ears, they promised to disclose wonders to her soul. Thus was Glava the wild huntress led by the voices of spring ever further away from the house on the mountain-top, till the naked branches of a still leafless beach-forest spread wide its arms to clasp her to its bosom, bidding her roam

through its shady mysteries till her longing should find rest.

But up there all alone by his window lay Gorromo, watching how the sun gradually changed place; and Volona, coming to bring him his midday meal, noticed that between his fingers he was clasping a faded yellow flower that Glava had laid on his pillow before leaving the house. Volona looked at him pityingly and placed the steaming bowl on the table beside him. "For sure she will be coming back," she murmured. "Have no fear, she will be coming back!"

"How will she come back?" groaned Gorromo. "How? how? Dost thou not hear the feet of Fate coming nearer and nearer, till one day they will pass my threshold and tread on my heart?"

Volona shrugged her shoulders, standing with her hands on her hips. Like her master, she was gazing out of the window, and her eyes had a far-away look.

"Ah! me!" she said slowly, "if only poor human creatures could but love without needing to possess, indeed life would be easier and pain would be less. The one loves too long, I am thinking, and the other too short; the one will dig down too deeply, whilst the other will be dancing lightly over the earth. Because of this great misfit the best hearts cannot be living together in peace. It is too much giving and taking there is, too much hoping and desiring. They will not be meaning to hurt each other—few will be really bad, they mean to be faithful, they hope to be true—but this I am thinking: a heart that holds an-

other, however loving it may be, can become a cage if the other heart feel its wings growing too large to remain within. No duty, no pity, no tenderness counts at all, at all. The heart will end by spreading its wings to be flying elsewhere. . . .”

Volona paused, and Gorrommo asked, turning suddenly toward her: “Volona, what has thy life been?”

“But sure I am thinking it has been a flash of light in a long trail of shade!” came the answer, in so definite a voice that it sounded like a closing door.

But Gorrommo longed to keep the door open, so once more he asked: “And was that one flash of light sufficient for all thy life?”

“One must be taking what one gets,” said Volona quietly. “Because a light has gone out for sure will not be meaning that it never was. There are those that take and those that give. I was of those that gave. I am content. Glava is my pride: may she be reaping all the happiness that passed me by. Better it is to be looking life squarely in the face, not to be crying for the stars and not to be wanting to gather lilies where thorns only can grow.”

“Perhaps thou hast never loved, Volona? Volona, hast thou ever loved?”

For a moment Volona did not reply; then: “The almighty fire will not be counting the sparks that fly from its heart,” she said. “Even refuse can be set ablaze, and its flame, I am thinking, can mount as high as any other flame. But who cares about the tide that will be ebbing from stricken hearts? I am

but a shadow that will be seeking oblivion. Age hath the face of night; age extinguisheth star and planet, moon and sun and all the fiery worlds. May its frosty hand be laid on my bones, may its chill enter my blood. I am asking now but for its darkness and silence. I will be bowing my head, for it is weary I am; in truth, it is weary. The flame has burnt out—unavailing were my words.”

Gorromomo looked at her with a new interest, which for a while made him forget his own misery. “Nay, nay,” he protested, “we need you of the frosted locks. Are ye not the rocks we cling to when we feel the dark waters mounting towards our souls? Speak! thy words will help me!”

“My Lord Gorromomo,” said Volona gravely, “weariness will be in my loins; the crown of fulfilment never was placed on my brow; the sorrows of sorrows will be the only law of my being, the long slow pain my part. I look forward to naught but to the grave. Therefore am I thinking the things that I could teach thee were but little to thy taste at all, at all.”

“Speak on nevertheless,” begged Gorromomo, “for I too am weary—am weary—”

“It is wondering I am how much talk there will be about love in the world,” said Volona after having been silent a while. “Some say man loveth best, some will be saying it is woman; I tell thee the balance is pretty equal, but seldom are two loves weighed by the same weight. Either the man it will be who gives, whilst the woman will be receiving like a queen

upon a throne, or it is the other way about that it is; and sure no one's fault will it be at all, at all, if two flames can never burn alike. No doubt God's great scales will not be weighing according to the need of poor human hearts. Therefore is too much given here and too little there; and to God it is all alike, for He sitteth too high, I am thinking, to be able to see into every hidden place. But here upon earth this discrepancy will be meaning tears and crushed hopes, broken lives and aching hearts. For again I am saying: Love is a creature of freedom. A bird will it be with wings, that flies whither it wills. No law will it be knowing, nor any call of duty; even the wrath of God will not be keeping it within bounds.

"Better it were for sure to be seeing things as they are and not to be struggling so sorely. But man is made to struggle, to desire, to obtain, to possess—or the world would stand still, I am thinking. But when man has gone beyond all desire—then the grave it is that calls him, then he will be wishing for Rest—Oblivion—Peace—call it as ye may; I simply will be calling it Death.

"But surely it is too much I am talking. What can an old woman like me be teaching such as thee? But this let me still be telling thee, for indeed it will be the truth: Not always frosted was my hair, nor were my eyes always dim; and the King when he will be passing the beggar standing in the dust, cannot know toward what dawn that beggar may be looking back."

"Yes, yes, much canst thou teach me, Volona," said Gorromomo sadly. "But what ye cannot give me is just the snow that lies like the hand of peace on thy head. My life should still stretch as a broad sunshiny road before me. Because I am crippled it came to a sudden and violent end. But the roots of youth were not torn out of my heart when the storm passed over me. Flames still consume me; I cannot, I cannot, surrender what I love!"

Volona stood mute beside him. Too simple was her mind to find words with which to ease his woe; belonging to the class of those who bow their heads, she knew not the language of revolt. "And sure she will be coming back," was all she said, ending with the very words wherewith she had begun. "But drink now of this beverage I have made thee, for surely man must live in spite of the pain in his heart." And the gaunt old creature, bending over him, put the bowl to his lips.

Gorromomo looked at her; and, meeting her strange sunken eyes, it was to him as though he were wandering through endless shadows toward forgotten ashstrewn shores—shores that would give up none of their dead.

XI

*Et ma jeunesse inassouvie
Marche au grand soleil comme un roi.
Henri Spiess.*

LIGHT and shade flickered through the branches of the forest. Hazy grey was its depth; the mighty trees were like an army of titans resting before some tremendous strife. Underfoot a sumptuous carpet had been spread. No dead leaf was to be seen: spring had decked the ground with a myriad flowers that raised their small faces to the life-giving sun.

Over this many-coloured marvel came Glava on her horse. The cathedral silence filled her wild heart with awe, so that, calming her steed, she rode slowly deeper and deeper into the heart of the wood. In enormous natural terraces the forest covered the mountainside. Almost even was the path which Glava was following; but beneath her an ocean of trees rolled downward into incalculable depths. Disturbed by the heavy hoof-tread innumerable birds rose from the bare branches, fluttering anxiously round their half-built nests, making the air resonant with their voices, breaking the silence with a busy sound of life. In clouds the steam rose from Focco's flanks. The great creature stepped lightly, as though

loth to crush the small flowers clustering beneath its feet.

Glava held her spear upright like a knight returning from some holy quest. She cared little whither she was going, nor was her brain weighted by anxious thoughts; Glava was simply part of the forest, and the joy of her heart was the same joy that was sweeping through nature. Her place seemed to be there; and soon the little birds ceased being frightened and greeted her with their songs as though she had been a guest bidden to take part in the universal feast of spring.

But suddenly another sound disturbed the forest silence—a sound of trampling hoofs coming toward her from the opposite side; heavy hoofs that appeared to be tired, as though the rider had wandered far. Glava drew rein and, raising her hand to shade her eyes, stared before her, wondering who could have strayed so far from trodden paths. Like a shadow risen from nowhere a rider was advancing towards her on an ash-grey horse. Battered was the shield that he carried, broken the spear in his hand; but the look of his eyes was that of an emperor when he gazes toward a distant land. His head was uncovered; in matted disorder his red-brown hair clung damp to his brow; a bandage had been bound round his forehead—a bandage all spotted with blood. Limping was the gait of his charger, but the man sat upright upon it like a conqueror returning from war. Man and maid advanced one toward the other as though

neither were willing to yield place, each considering the other an intruder without right to be there.

"May I ask where thou art going?" demanded the man, stopping his horse.

"And thou—whence comest thou?" was Glava's haughty retort.

"Art thou perchance Queen of this forest?"

"I am neither Queen nor subject," answered the maiden. "I am Glava, and many know the sound of my voice."

"I have never heard it," said the man. "But the sound of thy name has a wonderful spell, and verily thy voice is as silver bells calling the faithful to prayer. If my head were not already uncovered, I would uncover it now. But my helmet was smashed in battle—had its metal been less true, I should not be here this early morning to look upon thy face."

"Who art thou, and whence comest thou?" asked Glava, looking him full in the eyes. "Drops of blood are dripping from under thy bandage: if thou wilt dismount, I will bind up thy wound anew."

"It is but a scratch," said the knight. "I come from far, and my charger is footsore. I am seeking for water to give him a drink."

"I can lead thee to crystal-clear sources," said Glava, "for this is my world. This forest is my home—every path knows me, each tree is my friend."

"Lead on, and I will follow thee," cried the stranger.

Glava laughed. "The legend will have it," she cried, "that my spear lights in the dark; some say

that I ride a flame-coloured stallion, and that on nights of storm its hoofs can be heard galloping over the earth."

"And what is the truth about thee?" said the man, coming nearer. "Thy steed is not flame-coloured, and methinks it were thine eyes, not the spear, that would light in the dark."

"I can see through any obscurity," laughed Glava. "I am not afraid of the night; the stars are my companions as well as the dear sunlight."

"Art thou a spirit, a will-o-the-wisp? Wouldst thou dissolve into mist if I touched thee?" asked the man, stretching out his hand.

"Touch me if thou canst!" shouted Glava; and, setting Focco at a gallop, she bounded away from the stranger, swinging her spear high overhead. The turf flew from under the horse's heavy hoofs; the branches parted to let her pass. Her laugh came back to her pursuer in mocking notes. Focco's red-gold mane was full of shimmering light.

"Stop," cried the stranger, trying to follow her on his limping horse. Her laugh was his only answer, but the bare boughs of the beeches had turned into so many arms stretched out to hinder her headlong flight.

All at once a shudder fell across Glava's great joy. Like a shadow it came upon her, laying cold fingers on her heart. What is it? Perchance some remembrance of things that had already been? Of some dream she had dreamed before? Stopping her

horse suddenly, Glava stood still; knitting her brows she made a tremendous effort of thought. And then it was to her as though the glad green forest filled with night; as though the spring turned into winter; and through the dark, other hoofs were rushing behind her, another voice calling to her to stop. . . . A groan broke from Glava's lips. "Gorromo," she murmured. "And am I not thine? Is not the wild huntress a thing of the past? Should not one victim suffice her? Why should things repeat themselves? Once was enough—was surely enough!

"With whom art thou speaking?" cried the stranger, coming up to her side.

"With a shadow," said Glava dreamily, looking past him into the void.

"Good that thou didst slacken pace, for my Guthno cannot follow thee. He was once a mighty charger, but his strength is spent."

"The other one died," said Glava, speaking to some unseen soul.

"What sayest thou?"

"And it was winter," continued Glava, "and it was night—a long, long, endless night—"

"Uncanny creature," cried the man, "dost thou see visions, come back to this earth? But lead on, for I need water—water for myself and for my horse."

"I will lead thee," said Glava soberly. "But we will go less quickly, for thy horse is lame."

A silence fell between them, and the man stared with a new interest at the strange being at his side.

Never before had he seen such eyes—curious eyes that seemed to look inward, wild yet dreamy, dark yet crossed with a star-like light. How powerful was her body, how deep her bosom, yet how slim her youthful limbs! She sat her horse like a man: yet she was a woman in the most perfect sense of the word. The red-golden racer which she was riding seemed charged with light; it resembled those legendary creatures blessed with an eternal life; it was beautiful with a beauty belonging to the gods. The shadowy forest was a setting worthy of its perfection. Its shining hoofs were like four fallen stars moving over the flower-covered earth.

Glava was not thinking of her companion. Her thoughts were leading her to another place. But, turning her head, she met the eyes of the stranger fixed upon her; and suddenly something began to rise within her—something joyful like a song, something light as the sunshine, deep as the sea, vast as the sky; something that like a deep-toned bell rose grandly from her slumbering soul. And, having looked, Glava looked again. It was to her as though she was drinking of waters never tasted before.

“Who art thou?” she asked after having filled her eyes to overflowing. “Thou hast not told me thy name.”

“My name is Doochroon,” said the stranger. “A wandering warrior am I. Strife is my life, the sound of battle is my pleasure, the wind of change is my joy. I am a knight roving from adventure to ad-

venture. No country do I call my own, though somewhere in a dim far-away land I have an old castle awaiting my return, a nest from which I have flown. The seasons pass over me with their sun, their wind, and their rain. When snow drives me away from northern climes, I go toward the warm breath of the South; when there the summers become too hot, I come slowly back to the shade of forests such as these.

“Where’er a strong sword may be needed, mine does not rust in its scabbard. More than one wound marks skin of my body, but my heart is always ready for the sun of tomorrow. My spirit is that of the wandering bird, resting wherever it lists. I need no roof over my head, for my sleep is blessed, be it on the bare ground or in a feather bed or amongst desert sands. Like the rolling stone I am that gathers no moss. My freedom is my right; my sword has frayed many a passage, and many a door has it opened to let me through. I love the day that rises, and I bless the night when its shadows lie darkly over the earth.”

“How didst thou come here today?” asked Glava, her eyes still on his.

“Fate led my footsteps,” said he. “No doubt it was written that Doochroon and Glava should meet.”

“Doochroon!—it has the sound of whispering winds telling secrets in the dead of night. Doochroon!—it caresses my lips when I say it, like a long sigh rising from happy hearts.”

"Say my name again; say it many times over, for it has a new meaning when thy tongue doth pronounce it. Wonderful is thy voice, oh! maiden; never before have I heard such a voice."

"They call me the Voice on the Mountain," said Glava; "and in summer all the needy stream towards me craving help from my hands."

"Art thou a sorceress, fair maiden, that so many should crave thy help? Is thy dwelling a hole in a rock?"

"Nay, nay," laughed Glava. "I live in a house upon a mountain summit; a house built of solid stone, whence the sea can be seen and the sound of the waves can be heard; a house that becomes golden at sunset, and fiery at the rise of dawn, but when the days are gloomy it is like unto a grey nest among drifting clouds. A thorn-bush stands beside it—a thorn-bush that only once has flowered—flowered in the night like some sweet miracle suddenly come to pass."

"When did it flower?" asked the stranger, smiling into her eyes.

"Four years ago," answered Glava. "It was in winter, and at first I thought it was covered with snow."

"Were its flowers so white?" enquired the stranger.

"Yes, white; as white," said Glava, "as though tiny feathers had fallen from angels' wings."

"And it has never flowered since?"

"No," said Glava.

"Perhaps now it will flower again," laughed the knight.

"I wish it would," said Glava. "It was as lovely as a dream."

"And who are thy companions, Glava? who lives with thee in the house of stone?"

But Glava gave no answer to this question. She only turned her head away from Doochroon. . . .

XII

*. . . 'at her heart Love lay }
Quickening in darkness. . .*

D. G. Rossetti.

GLAVA and her stranger had reached the spot where waters bubbled crystal-clear out of the moss-covered rock. Swinging herself from her horse, the maiden filled her hands at the spring and, turning to the wounded warrior, held her dripping fingers to his lips. Like large diamonds the drops fell from between them, but the man's mouth was cooled by the refreshing draught, and his eyes seemed to have found eternal sources in hers.

No more drops were falling from Glava's fingers, but the man and the maid were still staring at each other—the warrior's lips were still pressed against the extended palms.

"It is life," murmured the man. "Never has water thus refreshed my soul."

"It is my very own source," whispered Glava. "It belongs to me alone."

"We shall share it now, Glava, shall we not? Thou wouldst not send a weary man away from the gates of Paradise."

"Thou art a passer-by," sighed Glava. "Soon thy desire will lead thee elsewhere."

"To me it seems," said Doochroon, "as though my desire would come to an end here; each wanderer must find his haven at last." And, springing from the saddle, he stood beside Glava, a man mighty in his strength.

Glava looked up at him. For the first time in her life she felt small; small, and as though it would be infinitely restful to lean her head against this unknown man's breast.

"May I wash and bind up thy wound?" she said in a quivering voice.

Doochroon, with a gesture full of manly grace, dropped on one knee and, lifting his handsome sun-burnt face toward her like a vassal doing homage, awaited her touch.

Trembling were the fingers that unbound the linen from his forehead; and very gentle, very unlike Glava's, was the voice that asked "Does it hurt?"

"Yes, it hurts," smiled the man; "therefore have I need of the kiss upon my brow."

"Ah! but I dare not touch thee thus," faltered Glava. "Be still, and I will wash thy wound with water and bind thy head with the kerchief I carry against my heart."

"Thy lips would heal me quicker than water," pleaded Doochroon.

"Be still," whispered Glava. "Dost not hear the breathing of the wood?"

"Is the wood not thine, O Glava?"

"It was mine till this day," said Glava; "but now it seems to me that it belongs to us both!"

"Wilt thou remain with me, Glava?"

"Oh! no, I cannot, I cannot! I shall have to go away."

"Back to the house on the summit, Glava? back to the small stone house?"

"Yes," said Glava.

"And who lives with thee there, Glava?" cried the man, seizing her hand.

But again his question was not answered. Glava was bending over the water, wetting her kerchief in the cool, bubbling spring.

"But thou wilt come back to me, Glava? Glava, thou wilt come back!"

Glava drew herself up and stood listening. Those words seemed once to have been pronounced by another voice—a voice that had said them to her long before.

"Shall I come back?" said Glava. "Shall I come back?" And the pain that rang through her words was but an echo of Gorromó's agony, calling to her from where he lay alone.

"I do not understand the ways of life," whispered Glava. "Joy and pain lie so close together, so much nearer than day and night."

"Why should there be any pain this morning?" cried the warrior. "Does not the sun lie warm over everything? Has it not entered like a song into our hearts?"

"Yes, yes! but it sings too loudly," said Glava. "My bosom cannot harbour so much light!"

"One must not be afraid of joy, Glava. It is a blessing that comes to one. One must hold it fast."

Glava looked at Doochroon for a moment without saying a word. "Hast thou found much joy on the roads of thy wanderings?" she asked; and there was something like apprehension in her voice.

"Rain and sunshine, storm and calm—always have I accepted the seasons as they came. But thou, Glava—hast thou had much joy in thy life?"

Glava was silent. Suddenly an inexplicable yearning rose in her bosom—something never before felt. It was to her as though she had always been lonely, as though nothing out of the past had really existed, as though this man at her side meant life. His voice was a revelation, and his hands seemed to have been sent to her to indicate a new road, never before seen.

"I have always thought that my life was built out of joy," she said at last in a dreamy voice; "that I was walking through joy, breathing it in at each step I took; that it met me at the threshold of each new-born day; that it closed my eyes at night. But now, suddenly, I do not know, I do not know—"

"Shall I teach thee the real meaning of joy?" asked Doochroon, laying his hand upon hers.

"No! no!" cried Glava, shrinking back.

"Art thou afraid of me?"

"Yes, I think I am afraid!"

"Thou dost not look as though aught could frighten thee, Glava."

"I am not afraid of things that I see," said Glava; "of things that I can see and touch."

"But thou canst see me, Glava—and God knows how I long for thy touch!"

"Ah! thou dost not understand," said Glava. "I am afraid of something that floats about thee—of something inexplicable that thine eyes seem to promise, something that makes me lonely and glad all at once—"

Taking both her hands in his, Doochroon drew her toward him so that they stood breast to breast.

"Thou must not be afraid of the things thou readest in my eyes, Glava. My life may have been wild and lawless, but my heart is true, and, were I to give it to a maiden, it would be hers to keep for ever and aye."

"I must go—I must go," cried Glava, drawing back. "I cannot remain beside thee; I feel, oh! I feel it would not be right!"

"Why, Glava?"

"I—I do not belong to myself!"

"What dost thou mean, Glava? To whom, to whom dost thou belong?" And something new seemed to rise out of the strong man's voice.

"I—I belong to all those that need me," faltered Glava. "I belong to the house on the summit—to those who come humbly toward me. . . . I belong to the world's great want."

"It is I who want thee now, Glava—I, and I alone. I shall carry thee away with me—away, away into life."

"I cannot follow thee," said Glava sadly. "There is a great sorrow that needs me—a voice that without mine would be dumb—"

"Now it is I that do not understand thee, Glava! What hast thou, O glorious maiden, what hast thou to do with pain?"

"I tell thee," said Glava with sudden wisdom, "it is only the things that float lightly over the earth that are joyful. The moment one digs a little deeper, one finds nothing but tears."

"Have there been many tears in thy life, Glava?" asked Doochroon; and a great tenderness was in his voice.

"No! no!" said Glava. "It was not my eyes that wept, but I have always seemed to be listening for tears that lie deeply hidden in human hearts. It was as though even the sea and the wind had kept some echo of a woe that is part of the earth. I have always been joyful, a creature born to gladness, going toward light; but it was to me as though I must tread softly and touch things gently, or tears would rise from under my feet, spring from beneath my fingers. They always seemed so near—I heard them in every human voice, they haunted me—and—and how shall I make thee understand?—because—because I was built out of joy, it was as though others needed me—needed me because I could give them

something they did not possess. They seemed to be living by a strength that was mine, not theirs—by some of the light, some of the gladness that made me a creature apart. Doochroon, canst thou understand?”

Doochroon was looking at Glava as though life had suddenly a new meaning—as though he dared no more touch her, as though she were floating far above him in purer spheres. The way-stained warrior had a longing to fall down and kiss the ground where she stood. “I know not if I really understand thee,” he murmured, “for can the earth understand the sky? But I know that I love thee, Glava. Glava, wilt thou be mine?”

But Glava turned away from him sadly. “No,” she said. “No, I cannot be thine.”

“But Glava! Glava, do not go from me. Glava, come with me; come with me, into a far-away land.”

“I cannot! I cannot!” cried Glava. “Dost thou not hear some one calling me? Hearken! it is like a great cry of woe.”

“It is the wind in the treetops, Glava; it is not a human voice.”

“I am not afraid of human voices, Doochroon,” she answered. “I am afraid of something that lies beneath the words that are said. For years it seems to have followed me, asking me to surrender something I do not want to give up.”

“Wilt thou not surrender it to me, Glava—give it to me so that I can carry it in my heart?”

“It might mean peace,” answered Glava strangely. “But one man’s peace becomes another man’s pain. We have no right to choose our way. We must just walk there where Fate has placed us, without trying to turn aside.”

“Where did Fate place thee?” cried the man.

“Up there near the clouds,” said Glava.

“Oh! no, Glava, Fate led thee here to my side.”

“And yet I must leave thee,” said Glava, turning from him; “I must leave thee to go back to the clouds.”

“If thou art human,” said Doochroon solemnly, “the clouds will not be able to keep thee; if thou art human, Glava, thou wilt come back to me!” And the strong man stood quite still with both hands extended toward her.

It was not a gesture of prayer, nor was it one of entreaty, nor was it a command; it was simply the great desire of man offering unto woman all that he is and has. “I shall wait for thee here,” said Doochroon; “here near the waters where thou didst quench my thirst.”

Glava had taken hold of Focco’s reins. Her cheek was pressed against the great creature’s mane. She raised her head to look at the stranger who had come into her life, and it was to her as though she were looking into the very heart of the sun. But no

answer did she give, nor did she lay her hands in those two outstretched palms. Swinging herself lightly on to her horse, she turned and rode slowly thence.

The tread of Focco's hoofs died away gradually in the distance. But Doochroon was still standing in the same attitude. There was no fear in his eyes; he did not raise his voice to call her back. For within his soul sang the great certitude that love would lead the Mountain Maiden back to his arms.

XII

*"Oh! Love has wings," the linnet sings;
But the dead return no more, no more.
The sea is breaking its old great heart
Against the golden shore.*

Alfred Noyes.

"**W**HERE wilt thou be going, Glava?"

It was old Volona who spoke, laying a restraining hand upon Focco's reins; but Glava stared over her head toward the horizon, with a dreamy look in her eyes.

"I am going to roam hither and thither as is my wont, Volona—roam about, 'mid forest and rocks, 'mid vale and crag. My roads have no name, nor do I know before-hand whither my fancy may lead me."

"Thou speakest of the things of yesterday," said the old servant roughly. "There are truths that will be serving their time, but today I tell thee that for sure thou wilt be knowing whither thy steps will go."

Glava turned slowly toward her old nurse. Something like a shudder shook her for a moment; then in a strained voice she asked: "What is thy meaning, Volona? and why is thy voice so hard? Is thy love for me waning? I hear reproach in thy words; have I done aught to make thy heart sore?"

"My heart! my heart! as though it were mattering

who trod on my heart, at all! at all! It is the heart in there that is aching, Glava, and thou will be knowing it, Glava—knowing it as well as I!”

Glava did not answer. Quite still did she sit on her horse, her eyes retaining the far-away look; but her smile was less radiant than usual, and heavy sighs made her bosom heave like a swelling sea.

Narrowly did the old woman watch her; in spite of her disapproval an immense pride filled her faithful heart. Had ever woman been more beautiful, had ever body been built so strong and perfect? Incomparable was the pose of the head on the shoulders, the line of the long slim thigh that lay against the horse’s flank. How marvellous was the clear-cut profile revealed against the sky! and had ever eyes been darker, deeper, or more mysterious beneath the peerless sweep of the brows? The maiden’s body was harmony in human form, was strength moulded into curves and lines; and beneath the cool touch of her skin it was easy to divine the ardour that ran through her blood.

Volona let this vision of youth in its most perfect form sink deep into her heart; and, while she gazed at it, a great pain rose in her bosom—a pain that might have been joy—and her soul was heavy with the grey heaviness of doom.

Never had Glava looked more wonderful. She was clad in a dull red tunic strange of hue; the girdle about her waist was of gold; and round her forehead she had wound her night-coloured tresses interwoven

with a golden band. At her side hung the much-loved sword; its hilt was alive with many-coloured fires, for was it not richly encrusted with gems? Over all lay the sun, radiant in its newly-risen splendour, enveloping the maiden in warm floods of light.

Glava was as a mystical goddess come down upon earth, a figure risen from some unforgettable legend of beauty which generations pass on to each other as an ineffaceable treasure. Of all this Volona was keenly aware; but but it only added to the weight which she felt in her heart.

“Child, it will be changed thou art,” said Volona raising her voice. “Sure thou wilt be changed a certain day when thou didst return in the dusk; the step of thy steed was weary, and thy eyes, I am thinking, looked beyond the things that they saw; with bent head didst thou enter thy chamber, without going to the man who lay awaiting thee with hungering heart—and God will be knowing that his vigil was long. Shadows crept into the house behind thee, and me-seems they have not quitted thy home since then. Thy voice will be having another sound, and when thou wilt be leaning over Gorrommo to kiss him, he will be feeling that thy lips have no more the same touch, at all, at all!”

Volona looked up at Glava, but the maiden sat her horse in silence, her lips pressed together, her breast moving slowly up and down.

“And it is shrinking thy step will be when it comes back toward us; but when it passes out into the open

it will be as the step of a prisoner escaping toward freedom. At night thou wilt be sitting near the open casement, and Gorromo's words will fall upon ears that do not listen, nor does the sound of his anguish say aught to thy heart; it is empty thy hands are of the caresses that meant life to the sufferer whose love will be crying toward thee in vain; the songs that he longs for, thou wilt not be singing; and when he whispers thy name it is as though a cold wind were passing through thy veins. Therefore, Glava, do I ask thee whither Focco will be leading thee beneath the face of the sun."

But Glava did not answer; Glava did not speak a word.

"I have something to show thee," continued Volona; "something that thou wouldst have noticed if thine eyes had not taken a way of looking beyond the things that are at thy feet!" And, seizing Focco's reins with an iron grip, the woman led the unresisting rider round to the other side of the house.

"See there," said Volona, pointing to a bush growing against the wall of stone. "See there! and tell me what sign thou wilt be reading? For I think thou wilt be seeing it with the same eyes as I!"

And, looking, Glava started, pressing her hands to her heart. "The thorns are flowering!" she cried; "flowering for the second time!"

"Yes," said Volona roughly, "flowering for the second time. And I am thinking that thou hast not forgotten in which year they flowered before."

Glava said nothing, but, slipping from her horse, she knelt down beside the thorn-bush. It was a mass of snow-white blossoms, white as stars of frost.

"Of what season will they remind thee?" asked Volona, laying a heavy hand on the girl's shoulder. "Of Spring, Summer, Autumn, or Winter? Is there perchance snow on the ground? An canst thou be telling me whose is the body that is being carried in through the door of the house, and whose blood will have been marking a small scarlet line on the ground?"

"Volona!" Glava's voice rose into the air like a complaint. "Volona! what art thou meaning? Thy fingers seem to be bruising my heart."

"Art not remembering the old legend that speaks of the thorns flowering when maidens' hearts become gardens of Love? Thy bush flowered once for Gorromo: for whom will it be flowering now?"

"Do not torture me, Volona! Thou knowest not what thou sayest, I have no answer to give thee—but let me pluck a spray of these blossoms and carry them to Gorromo's bedside; he can put them near his window, and when the sun shines on them they will turn into gold."

"Sure I forbid thee to bring him such flowers," cried Volona, "for he too will be seeing the sign that I see! Here! I shall be breaking thee a branch, and thou canst be riding away with it, carrying it like a banner before thee—a banner that shall lead thee ever further away from this house!" So saying, the stern

old woman tore a large twig from the bush and, pressing it into Glava's hand, pointed toward the path that led downward into the valley. "It is not I that will be trying to detain thee. The river will be running into the sea; sooner or later its course will be ending there. Thus has it been written in the Great Book of Fate. Hearts must break, and men must laugh, and women must weep; but when the morrow comes round again the sun will be rising in the same old place.

"Thy lips till this day have opened to say things that might have been left unsaid, but now that thou hast truths to reveal, thy tongue surely will be dumb! And it is sore that my heart is within me; but all my tears, I am thinking, would not be turning thy feet from the road thou art destined to follow. Come back if thou canst, remembering the soul that will be perishing if thou takest away thy light." And, turning, Volona went back into the house.

Like one dazed, Glava remained standing where Volona had left her, holding the bloom-laden branch in her hand. She stared at the curious dry wood that had flowered with such immaculate blossoms. Flakes of snow they seemed, or strange white insects that at any moment might melt or fly away. They had no stems: their delicate heads grew straight out of the branch between the angles of the thorns, which were long, hard, and polished, with cruelly sharp points. Focco stood by his mistress stamping up the ground, tossing the foam from his bit, switching his

tail; but Glava, indifferent to his impatience, remained as one absorbed in deep thought.

How marvellous was the world, seen from this height! A breath of heaven lay over its austere aloofness; Glava was penetrated with its beauty, and, gazing about her, she saw it all, felt it all, realizing it as she had never before done. It was already becoming a landscape no more quite her own. The eyes with which she looked at it had seen other visions open before them—visions of other lands to which a strange voice had been leading her through the marvels of Spring. For Glava the Mountain Maiden had returned more than once to the source in the wood; and on this day was not Doochroon to lead her to a spot which alone he had declared to be worthy of her beauty? Therefore were Glava's eyes becoming foreign to things she had known since a child.

Volona, watching from her window, saw how the maiden mounted her house, how she rode away holding the branch of thorns before her—rode away without turning her head.

But Gorrommo had drawn up the cover over his face, so as not to hear the sound of Focco's hoofs carrying his love whither his feet could not follow, whither his voice could not reach. . . .

XIII

*Love, love, love; and they hardly knew
The sense of the glory that round them
grew;
But the world was a wide enchanted gar-
den,
'And the song, the song, the song rang
true.*

Alfred Noyes.

NEAR the bubbling spring sat Doochroon, his sword on his knees. His charger Guthno stood behind him, rubbing his steaming flanks against the bark of a tree. Overhead the beeches were showing signs of green; a soft breeze passing through the branches was a message of approaching joy.

The wandering knight's forehead was still bound with Glava's kerchief. His eyes were full of dreams, for he saw a long future full of light, and hope, and joy. Many roads did he see, leading to many places—but no more lonely were his roving. He was advancing into happiness with a woman clasped in his arms. Flowers did he see, and sunshine, gardens full of shade, and nights beneath the smiling moon, whose pale face was mirrored in cool running waters. And wherever he strayed the woman was with him.

Her voice was his bugle-call, her eyes were his beacon, her hands were his home, and her bosom his rest. Wherever his feet left their traces, her feet marked a trail at his side. And Doochroon smiled whilst the birds sang overhead and the small stream bubbled and whispered and murmured like a wise little voice telling verities which had nothing to do with the joy in his heart.

But also of war did the strong man dream—of glorious encounters that his sword would settle, of the clashing of steel, of wild battle-cries, of flashing weapons and silver-shining spears. But at the end of each day stood Glava, ready to bed his weariness upon her lap, ready to receive him with tender words and soft-caressing hands. He even had the vision of the marvellous maiden swinging a shining blade at his side—for was not Glava a woman apart, stronger, braver, built of grander stuff, a being that the sun had ripened with his rays, that the mountain altitudes had assigned to higher destinies, that storm and wind and raging elements had hardened into a diamond of priceless worth?

Thus mused Doochroon as he sat there awaiting his love, whilst Focco's hoofs were carrying her toward him, down from her eternal heights, down from cloudy regions into the very heart of life. . . .

Now the boughs parted, and she stood before him, a vision sweeter than ever man dared dream. Red-clad, she sat her charger, her deep eyes gazing into his, her lips half open, her bosom swelling with

happy sighs. Wonderful indeed was Glava, a glorious hope fulfilled. To his feet sprang the man who had been awaiting her. Lifting her down, he caught her wildly to his breast with a shout of triumph. And Guthno, standing behind him, lifted his head and neighed, tearing the forest silence with a weird note of welcome, to which Focco proudly responded with another cry.

Then away from the bubbling water they strayed, down into the heart of the forest, always further from the mountain-top, always deeper into the shadows, so that the echo of other voices could reach Glava's ear no more. The heavy horses followed them crashing through the wood.

"I have a magic spot to show thee," whispered the warrior; "a glade where the sky seems to have fallen to the ground. Here all the flowers are pale; Spring has hardly touched them with her hand yet. But down there colours run riot. Down there I shall tell thee of wonders thou hast never yet heard!"

"Thou hast not perceived what I have brought thee," said Glava. "See! the thorns are flowering for the second time." And, holding the branch like a palm in her hand, Glava revealed to him the miracle that had come to pass. But less wonderful were the magic flowers than the dawning revelations which each read in the other's eyes.

Down, down they scrambled, side by side, hand in hand. The stones rolled from beneath the hoofs of their horses, bounding and leaping before them like

mischievous spirits showing them the way. The farther they descended the more leafy became the branches, the denser the shade, till a golden-green dome shut the sky quite away from their sight. To a flower-filled glade did Doochroon lead his love, where the ground was as blue as the changing waves of the sea, as blue as the Virgin's mantle on the day of All Saints, and the silence that reigned there was mysterious, like that within the walls of a church.

Grim, grey giants, the trees towered over them, waving their branches like monstrous arms above their heads, blessing them or warning them to go to another place; but this was the blue-carpeted chamber which Doochroon had selected for his love. And here it was that he knelt down before her, speaking of his passion, confessing his hopes; whilst she followed in his eyes his cherished visions and heard from his lips what dreams he had dreamt.

Like blessed sighs his words stole into her heart; his voice laid itself about her senses as incense coils round temple pillars, veiling them in fumes of mist. Her body seemed to be floating, to have lost its weight, to have become light as a feather that any breeze might carry away; every sound had a new meaning, each colour a new beauty, each perfume a new spell; and when, springing to his feet, the strong man drew her into his embrace, she lay unresisting against his heart, like a bird that has found its nest. Lifting her face toward him, her lips seemed to ask for his. And when, bending down, he kissed her,

it was as though her soul were gradually rising, rising, till like a luminous bird it seemed to spread wing, soaring higher and higher into limitless worlds of light.

I know not what it was that he said to her, nor what were the songs the birds were singing, nor what were the secrets the branches were whispering when the soft wind passed through the trees; I only know that the man and the woman stood in the very heart of life, and, that, although the girl's eyes were closed, she saw before her a glorious star-strewn path leading into a world unknown. Fears were forgotten, as other voices were forgotten and the eyes overflowing with pain. Forgotten was also the narrow track that led through clouds back toward the small stone house.

"I shall hold thee fast," spoke Doochroon. "Our love is a kingdom with many roads; upon each in turn shall I guide thee, and each one shall lead us further into joy. Each will be different, so that thou shalt never be tired. Toward such bliss shall I carry thee that thou wilt not be able to discern if it be the glory of dawn or of sunset that is flooding thy soul."

"My soul is in thy hand," answered Glava, "and thy words paint pictures I have never before seen."

"Thou art mine," said the knight, pressing her closer to his bosom; "mine, mine! Now thou belongest to me!"

"I know not if I belong to thee," said Glava; "it seems to me that I belong to Love."

"And am I not Love?" asked Doochroon.

"I know not," said Glava again. "I know not if Love has many faces—but I know that today it hath thine!"

"Glava," cried Doochroon, "what is thy meaning? Ever do thy words astound me anew. They seem to come from wells of truth where pain lies crouching in the dark. I hold thee here against my heart, I feel the throb of thy blood, I see the blue of thine eyes, I touch all that beauty that is thine; but at times it is to me as though I were clasping a phantom in my arms."

"I know not what I am," said Glava, "mortal or phantom, or a spirit straying over the earth; nor do I know what the wind of tomorrow may blow over our lives, that today we think to hold in our hands."

"But thy heart is mine? Speak, oh! Glava! Tell me that thy heart is mine!"

"I know not," repeated Glava for the third time. "I know not if I have either soul, heart, or brain. But I know that I have a body and that the sun is warm, and that thy lips are soft, and that to lean on thy strength is like being carried upon a wave of light."

"But thou wilt come with me, Glava? Thou wilt follow me to that far-off land where my old nest lies empty, where the open windows are always calling for the master who has been away too long? Think how the ancient walls will rejoice if I bring back a

bride! Thou canst not go from me, Glava, now that thy lips have trembled on mine?"

"I think that one day I shall follow thee into that distant land," said Glava, looking over the blue-flowering glade; "for meseems my heart has grown into thine. But there is a great pain aching somewhere in my breast, a pain that I shall have to face again, and again, although it is hardly a pain of mine."

"Of what pain are thou speaking, Glava?"

The maiden laid her hands on Doochroon's shoulders and gazed yearningly into his face. "I love thee!" she cried almost fiercely; "I love thee, I love thee! It is as though I had drunk fire into my blood with thy kisses; as though another soul had awakened in my body, another vision in my eyes. But it is not yet that I can follow thee, Doochroon. There are still chains hampering my feet and voices calling me back!"

"Glava, why dost thou torture me? Wilt thou never say what are the voices to which thou art always listening, what it is that calls thee back toward thy heights?"

"I love these blue flowers," said Glava wistfully. "Up there no such carpet has been spread beneath my feet. And it is to me as though I could follow that look in thine eyes to the very ends of the earth. But I was born upon a mountain summit, and something of my soul has remained amongst the clouds." Glava paused a while. "Besides," she continued, "it

is not only thy thirst that cries to be stilled! My hands feel so pitiful that it is as though I could ease more than one longing, heal more than one pain. But no man will share his treasure with another: he wants to be sole possessor, to call it all his own. If the eyes he loves looks into other eyes, the hands he loves clasp other hands, the lips he loves touch other lips, he can feel no joy, only torture, when they return to his side; and ever will he see a shadow between him and what he thought was his. Yet none of you can know what is asked of our hearts, what hands beat against their closed doors, what waves of desire dash against the citadels we have tried to build around our inner shrine. Ye have not heard the many voices asking, imploring, tearing our souls with their cries, as though we alone could satisfy their needs. We stand looking down upon them whilst their longing rises in fumes toward us, and we wonder why all the world should be full of love that remains unanswered, and yearnings that never can be stilled; our hands are full, yet we must keep their abundance for one alone, or we murder the heart that we think we are saving. But this law that we must abide by does not prevent the desire of others from mounting toward us, like leaping flames that try to break through our resistance.

“Ah, I do not ask thee to understand, for neither can I understand. Sometimes meseems God had cursed the daughters of Eve, placing within their

hands a responsibility which is greater than they can carry. My desire yearns toward thee, but my pity turns its face back to the clouds."

Doochroon stood staring at the woman he loved. He longed to bend down, to lift her on to his horse, to carry her away from the voices which pursued her even in his arms; but there was something holy about this maiden, something that tamed his ardour, something that he dared not touch with greedy hands. So limpid were her eyes, and the words she spoke seemed to rise from such pure depths of truth, that he felt humble before her, like a waystained wanderer who suddenly enters a church. His adventures of yore seemed all at once to become small, shadowy, and vain—things belonging to a past to which he had no desire to return. The voice of the Mountain Maiden had something in it that belonged to greater verities, that were part of perfect truth, untouched by the sophistries of the world beneath. He felt that he must possess her, that life would be worthless unless she were his—but he knew that never should he lay hands on her beauty till she came to him willingly, ready to follow him to the end of the earth.

"Daily shall I come to this spot where I have kissed thee, where the hyacinths have stared up at the wonder of thy face," said Doochroon solemnly as though with his hands on an open Bible. "Here shall I await thy will. I feel that thou wilt return to me, that in spite of other voices thy heart will lead

thee to mine; but it shall be at thine own hour, Glava, not mine. And even if the flowers should fade, changing colour, drooping their small heads to the ground, it will not be a sign to me that thou hast forgotten the way to our wood. I am sole arbiter of my Fate—and have not men been known to wait from season to season for the sound of the foot that they love?”

With a sudden cry like that of a child in pain, Glava threw herself into the strong man's arms, clinging to his breast like one drowning. “Oh! yes, wait for me,” she cried, “for I need thee. I know not why I need thee so much! For am I not strong, unaccustomed to be lonely and to be led by my own free will? But I need to know that I can find thee at the end of my road. I cannot tear my heart out of my body to leave it between thy hands; but if I could do so, thou shouldst have it for sure. But now ask no more questions—let me go! The voices are stronger than ever beating against my soul. I think that many are streaming toward me; I feel as though a river of pain were flowing toward my house, and I must be there to meet it, for I dare not take from the sorrowful the hope in which they believe. I know not why some hearts are destined to be wells from which all lips long to drink—but I must have springs for all of them till the great hour will strike when my face can be turned toward my rising sun—till I can flee into thine arms that will receive me like a blessed haven of rest.”

“I shall await thee,” said Doochroon simply, with the trust of a man who believes in truth.

And Glava went from him; upon her red-golden stallion did Glava the Mountain Maiden ride back to the clouds out of which she had come.

XIV

*He lay there like one who has too much
to forget; all that was, all but one thing,
the Last. . . .*

Rainer Maria Rilke.

“THE clouds are gathering,” said Volona.
“There is going to be a storm. The sea-
king is sending out his white horses to warn
wandering souls to come home.”

She was talking to old Jan, the huntsman who came at times to bring venison, corn, and honey to the house on the rocks, and who stood now beside her watching the billows hurling themselves against the grey reefs far, far below, the dull thud of their rising wrath reaching their ears like a moan.

“It is the hearts of the drowned that are crying with the tides,” said old Jan, folding his cloak closer about him. “The wailing waves will be full of voices that never can be stilled. Along shadowy strands dead women’s hair must be floating hither and thither like dark clouds beneath the sea. On moonlight nights I have been seeing pale faces and pale hands imploring for help that never comes.”

“Sure thy old tongue will be knowing many a tale,” said Volona. “But too full they are, I am thinking, of the laughter of ghosts, or of the tears

that have been wept upon phantom shores. My blood will be running cold when I am listening, so that each passing sea breeze becomes as a sigh of souls that will be lost in the wilderness."

"The sea gives not up its dead," spoke Jan; "therefore it is so full of voices that the winds of North, East, and West will be carrying like a warning all over the earth."

"Ay, ay," murmured Volona, shaking her head; "and sure so it is, it is."

"On many a night of storm," continued old Jan, "have I listened to the sad sea-song; all the heart-throbs of men were gathered together in a terrible wail of distress, the wild winds blew, and like whirling wings of earth-bound souls the tempest swept over the deep. And once a song was I hearing, grey, gruesome, and weird—"

Jan broke off suddenly and began to murmur beneath his breath. Volona stood quietly beside him. She knew the old fellow's ways and that there was more to come.

"Out of the fall of lonely seas and out of the wind's great sorrow a dirge was rising," continued the man; "a dirge like muffled bells beneath fathoms of water—unnumbered fathoms that no hand will ever have sounded and no eye will ever have seen."

"And it is dreaming thou wilt be," said Volona. "Thou wilt not have come up all this way, I am thinking, to tell about dirges for thy phantom dead.

Yet, tell me, for whom will those dirges have been sung?"

"For drowned lovers," said old Jan, passing his rough hands over his lips. "For drowned lovers whose flaming hearts could be finding no oblivion till they sank into the deepest ocean graves."

"And is it peace they will be finding there?" asked his companion, looking with weary eyes over the ocean, whilst angry gusts of wind tore at her silvery locks, dashing them across her face.

"Nay," mumbled the huntsman, "when the waves were restless, then the ancient woe would be awakening them in their watery beds, tumbling them back toward the shores to which they had once belonged. And the dirge for those hearts it was that I was hearing that night in my dreams."

"So they will have been dreams?" asked Volona.

"Dreams, dreams!" grumbled the old man. "Where do dreams begin at all, at all, I am asking, and where dost reality end? Tell me that if thou canst, and what is the colour of night when it will be turning into dawn. And who will be telling us what the dark wind is relating to the skies and what the snow is saying to the ground when it will be falling from its height, or what will be the vision of the dying deer when I will be shooting my arrow right through its heart? . . . Ay, ay, it is not simply a world for the living, I am thinking, or a world for the dead. I can only tell thee that the voices of sea, and wind, and storm, will be having

a deeper meaning than ye can fathom, and old Jan for one will be knowing many a thing that comes to him out of the dead of night. Well, well, but it will not be talking about it that will give understanding to those that cannot see. Sure and I must be off. The clouds have a murky look—”

“And sheer golden was the sun when she rode away at dawn,” said Volona, moving away toward the house.

“And where may she be, our dear young mistress?” asked old Jan, with his head on one side.

“That thou canst be asking of the beings thou art so fond of,” grumbled Volona. “Thou canst be asking it of the clouds, of the wind, and of the storm. It is not for me to be telling ye where Glava has gone!”

“Oho! is that the way we are feeling!” mocked the huntsman. “Then I shall be wishing ye farewell. My way is long, and my old bones are stiff; and, forsooth, ye will be seeing me another day.”

“And sure it can never be known if there will be another day, at all, at all,” said Volona gloomily.

“I am thinking that the coming storm has got into thy bones,” scoffed the huntsman, hoisting an empty sack on to his shoulder. “May the good God keep you and be sending you sweeter thoughts.”

“And it is not the garden of His pleasure that I will be,” replied Volona in a surly tone. “But I wish that Glava might be coming. The clouds are racing in troops; the grey Man of the Hills

is abroad." And with something like a shudder Volona turned away.

Jan stood watching her retreat, then called after her: "And the sad one yonder—how may he be?" he asked.

"The hand of the Lord will be lying heavily upon him," said Volona over her shoulder. "The flowers of gladness will not be blooming for him either. But our feet must learn to walk over stony roads as well as smooth ones. I am thinking that happiness may not be counted by the number of kisses we receive, at all, at all."

"And thy share was surely but meagre," said the old man, lighting his pipe whilst he turned away from the wind. Then as an afterthought he added: "And if ye had not always been awaiting for messages from the world below, old Jan and Volona might have had a fireside of their own by now." And he laughed a hard laugh.

"Get thee hence!" scolded the old woman, "and use thy foolish tongue for other songs. Volona has never warmed her hands beside any flame but the one that will be pleasing her." With a movement of ire she swept the loose strands of hair out of her eyes.

"And that is why thou hast always felt cold," scoffed the old man, still struggling with his pipe. "Well, well, and sure it will be useless to go over the same old ground. Thou wast ever as prickly as the thistle that grows in lonely places, even when

thy hair was not white." And, having at last lit his pipe, the old man hobbled away into the clouds and was gone.

"And it is always of my grey head that they will be talking," muttered the old woman, peering after him into the thickening mist; "of my grey head. And uncanny the old woman will be to them because it is never complaining she is. But what may they be knowing of the secrets an old tree guards beneath its bark? Ay, ay, no doubt my days of blooming roses will be a thing of the past. Maybe the thorns will have lasted longer than the flowers. But, for all that, their scent has remained in my heart!" And with bent head the old woman crept back into the house.

Now the clouds broke into a storm of rain, dashing their showers against the walls. Like a flight of phantom swans the mist swept over the house, blinding the window out of which Gorromó was staring as was his sad wont. With a weary gesture he let his head fall back amongst the cushions and closed his eyes.

A great change had come over Gorromó's face. Pale as it had always been, it was almost ghastly now, and the eyes seemed to be consuming it with some secret inward flame that nothing could quench. The finely chiselled features seemed to have shrunk; hollow were the cheeks, and deep lines marked the forehead, rendered more dolorous the firmly-closed lips. The hand of death hovered over him. It was

as though a forlorn hope only had arrested his feet on the brink of the grave.

"Thy freedom is nigh," murmured Gorromo under his breath. "Only a little while longer, O Glava, and no sorrowful face will any more watch for thy coming from this window; no tear-filled voice will greet thy return. My place will soon be empty, Glava; the thread of life is very thin. All I ask of thy mercy is not to kill my soul before it takes flight. I want once more—only once more—to look into thine eyes and to find my own reflection in their depths, Glava! For the touch of thy lips am I craving—of thy lips without the shadow of other kisses on their bloom. But if I guess rightly, it is already too late, Glava—too late, too late!" And from the closed lids heavy tears rolled down the man's sunken cheeks; tears heavy like drops of blood. Folding his hands over his breast, Gorromo lay motionless, as one already dead, and the shadows of dusk began to creep into the chamber like monstrous grey moths.

Outside, the storm was raging; denser and denser became the mists that swept past Gorromo's window, an army of wraiths hurrying to an unknown doom. The wind howled after them in a vain endeavour to frustrate their flight. The wrath in his voice made them flee all the faster, for was not his embrace destruction, and the song that he sang a war-cry that could only mean death?

To the man within it was as though the gale had

torn open the doors of his heart, delivering from captivity all the sorrow and revolt of his broken youth. The voices that screamed with the storm were the voices of all his suppressed desires that had broken loose, overthrowing his last barriers, taking their revenge for having been kept within bounds too long.

The moan of the wind fell and rose like the waves of a troubled sea; at times a long-drawn wail could be heard, like the last sigh escaping from the lips of a murdered man. Now the hurricane was beating with angry hands at the door, was tearing at the latch, was trying to force its way into the large low room that once had been a temple of Love.

Suddenly Gorromo opened his eyes. Was it really the storm that was wrestling with the door, or had he heard a human voice piercing the roar of the elements? Glava! Perhaps Glava was outside! Perhaps Glava had come back and could not open the portal; perhaps the hard metal was wounding her rain-drenched hands.

"Volona!" cried Gorromo. "Volona! Volona—Volona!"

And Volona, faithful guardian of all his hours of darkness, came hurrying into the chamber, wiping her hands on her apron, her hair still ruffled from having affronted the wind.

"It may be Glava," the sick man cried in breathless tones. "Let her in, let her in, let her in!"

"Nay, nay, it will not be Glava," said Volona

"It will be the wind's impatience or the souls of lost wanderers hoping to find sanctuary in thy house."

"Quickly, Volona—open, open! Do not loiter: she may be cold, she may be trembling, she may be afraid—"

Volona, with an incredulous toss of the head, went to the door and, after wrestling a few seconds with the key, dragged it open, letting a gust of wind whirl into the room, like an enemy bursting through a fallen rampart. And—a man stood on the threshold—a tall man, all clad in white.

"The monk!" exclaimed Gorromomo, covering his face as though to ward off a blow. "The monk! the monk!"

The stranger's great stature filled the doorway. The water streamed in small rivulets from the hem of his habit. Like the wings of some great bird his white cloak was beating in the wind; or it might better be likened to a holy banner that pious hands carry through a gale toward a church. The eyes of the monk were fixed upon Gorromomo. He seemed not to hear the storm's angry bluster; no words of greeting did he say; he uttered no sort of excuse. He simply stared at the man on the couch as though he could not tear his look away from that ash-pale face. For a while neither spoke; the sound of the storm alone filled the room. Then with a crash the door shut to suddenly, and the two were still facing each other in the half dark.

Gorromomo was the first to recover speech. "Thou

art wet," he said with innate courtesy. "Volona will light the fire, and it may please thee to dry thy garments at its flame. Forgive a sufferer if he cannot rise to receive thee, but Volona will minister to thy wants."

Still the monk did not speak. But, moving farther into the room, he laid his staff on the table; then, going to where Gorromomo lay, he bent over his couch and in a hoarse whisper asked: "Who art thou? I came to search for the Voice on the Mountain, and it is a sick man that I find in its place."

"The Voice on the Mountain has wandered toward the valleys," said Gorromomo; "and I too am awaiting its return."

"When will she come?" asked Gaetano, and a great longing sounded out of his voice.

"Day and night are all as one to her," said Gorromomo. "She measures not human suffering by the sand that flows through a glass."

"Art thou always waiting for her?" asked the monk, not without resentment in his voice.

"Yes," answered Gorromomo. "And in my grave I still shall wait."

"Was she ever thine?" asked again the jealous voice.

"No, she was never mine!" said Gorromomo; and as he pronounced the words it was to him suddenly as if all his veins had opened and his blood were flowing in a great red river—flowing slowly, slowly, away from his heart. The monk's ascetic face became

hazy; the room filled with mist; a curious singing in Gorromó's ears was like a far-off heavenly voice, and many wings seemed to quiver in the air around him. Many wings—many, many wings. . . . With a cry Volona was on her knees beside him, raising his head in her hands.

But the monk stood staring down upon him, hoping that the sad man was dead,

XV

*Where words come out of the depths of
truth.*

Tagore.

VOLONA had lit a great fire on the hearth. The white-frosted monk sat beside it on Glava's stool. The flames reddened the folds of his garment; his hands were clasped together; his back was turned to the couch. Gorrommo lay quite still on his cushions. But Gorrommo was not dead. And Gaetano knew that Gorrommo was not dead.

The room was nearly dark. Outside the wind was still howling, but the force of the storm had abated. The rain could be heard beating in showers against the panes. The chamber was very still except for the crackling of the fire and the heavy breathing of the man who was ready to wait for his love even in his grave.

"Are thy feet bleeding?" Gorrommo's voice broke through the silence with the suddenness of a star falling in the night.

The monk started but did not turn round. A curious expression crept into his eyes; he held his breath as if not quite sure whether his senses were playing him a trick.

"She told me that thy feet were bleeding," continued the sad voice across the dark; "were bleeding because they never before had walked the roads of the earth."

Gaetano turned slowly toward the man who he had hoped was dead and with an effort lifted his downcast eyes to that man's face. "She told you that? She had pity upon my bleeding feet?"

"She told me why thou hadst come to her; she told me of thy longing and of thy thirst."

"Why did she tell thee?"

"Because there was a time when she told me everything. Once she had the heart of a child—of a child playing in the sunshine with flower-filled hands."

"And now?" asked the monk, coming a step nearer. "And now?"

"Now she turns her head away when I call her by her name. With half-open lips she seems listening for the sound of another voice."

There was a silence after those words; then it was again Gorromio who spoke. "Come nearer to my couch. I am weak, my voice cannot be raised over much, and I feel as though thy loathing for me would lessen if certain words were to be said."

The monk lifted his head. "Who said that I loathed thee?" The tone of his voice was anxious and yet sharp.

"I hear things that are left unsaid," answered Gorromio. "I am but a big pulsing brain since my body does not exist, and my eyes seem to have be-

come so piercing that I can read right into human hearts. Come nearer. I am but a shadow that soon will be a thing of the past; therefore is it useless to feel any resentment against me. Bring yonder stool over to my bedside—I would look into thy face, and, if it is within my power, I would understand thy pain.”

Still the monk stood irresolute by the fire. Something within the voice of the sufferer brought a choked feeling to his throat. But Gaetano had the fierce shyness of caged animals that believe not in the kindness of man. His cramped soul longed to expand beneath the words of the stranger, but a curious diffidence kept him at bay, watching his host as though he were in the presence of a foe.

“She was full of pity for thy distress,” resumed Gorrommo gently. “She spoke of thy coming and of the help she hoped to give thee; she told me about the sorrow that she read in thine eyes.”

“Why is she not here? I came to see her,” said the monk suddenly. “I came to hear her voice, to receive help from her hand.”

“They all come to her,” said Gorrommo sadly; “they all want help from her. She is as living water from which all hope to drink. But I tell thee she has wandered down into the valleys; water runneth downward, however gloriously clear may be its source.”

Again there was silence. The crackling of the fire

was like far-away voices hurriedly spreading some fatal tidings which the wind caught and whirled up the chimney so as to carry it over the world. Then with a sudden movement the monk strode to the couch and, seizing the sick man's hand, questioned in a husky voice: "What wast thou to her? Speak! What is she to thee? I must know or my heart will burst!"

"She is the pulse of my life," answered Gorromomo solemnly; "she is my hope, my joy, my flame, my pain—my grief!"

"And thou! What art thou?"

"I am but the breath of a song that has been sung. I am a voice that once found an echo in her heart. I am the shadow of a thing which she thought eternal, but which God had placed in her hand for only a season. I am but a key gone rusty that opened a door for another to step in."

"What other?" groaned the monk.

"I have not seen him," said Gorromomo very softly, "but I know that he has the face of Love."

"Thy words torture me," cried the other. "They are heavy with unspoken possibilities; they rise up before me like phantoms wringing their hands in despair! Why didst thou not try to hold her back? Why didst thou not keep her here at thy side?"

"Here at my side?" An immense pain trembled through Gorromomo's voice. "Can one stay the flight of a bird winging toward its mate? Can one hinder

the sap from rising in Spring? And if I had kept her here at my side, what had been the difference for thee?"

The monk clenched his fist with a gesture of wrath and hit it against his brow, as though threatening a foe within his brain.

"I need her! I need her!" he cried. "She has got into my blood, into my brain, into my soul! I hear her name in every wind that blows; I see her eyes in every passing cloud; I feel her presence like a breath about me wherever I stray. Like one possessed by a madness, I climbed this height to hear her voice again—her terribly wonderful voice!" The monk covered his face with his hands and stood for a moment thus; then, turning again to Gorromó, he asked with ill-suppressed fear in his voice:

"Who think ye has come before me—who? Who has taken possession of her heart? I cried unto her to give me something, and she left a kiss on my brow—one single kiss. Her lips burned me, but her soul was not mine when she kissed me; it was the kiss of pity. I, who know nothing of kisses, know that that was not a kiss of love. And then—did she not speak to me of a love that she believed in, of a love that lent words to her tongue and power to her touch—of a love that filled her life?"

Gorromó's eyes closed for a second. An indescribable expression of sadness contracted his features.

"She thought then that she loved me," he said, almost in a whisper, so that Gaetano had to bend over

him to catch the words. "It was—because—because she knew nothing of life. Four years the dear illusion lasted; and I, like a coward—I took the treasures she offered me; took them kneeling as the priest takes his vows. But, in taking, I knew that I was clasping an impossible happiness, that I was clutching at a thing that was never really mine. Like the dying man who revels in the sunshine, dreaming that its warmth was made for his joy alone, I received the glory of her gift, trying to deaden the certainty that it was a miracle that had never really come to pass. I was living with a star in my heart—a star that verily belonged to the skies and not to me. But its light was so wondrous, and so perfect were the days that we lived beneath that illusion, that sometimes—just sometimes—I forgot that I had built my house upon sand."

"Did she never really love thee?" The monk had now seated himself close by the sad man's side. All unconsciously his tone had become softer. It was easier to endure the voice of sorrow than to listen to the song of success.

"It were denying the faith I have lived by, were I to say that she never loved me," answered Gorromo, clasping his hands. "Some part of her loved me—but it was pity that made her heart tremble, and the divine sweetness of charity that gave me her lips. Her young soul was standing on the verge of life, like an angel looking down from a high rock upon the vast world beneath. It was spreading its wings

ready to fly toward any sunrise, when suddenly my broken life fell across her path. With hands of the eternal mother that lies sleeping in each woman, she bent down, lifting my sorrow into the heaven of her innocent heart, and like a saint she sat guarding it, believing it was love. And when my lips hungered for her kiss, she gave it to me as the flower gives its beauty to the falling dew. My lips were indeed the lips of Love, and my love was a man's love, stormy, fearful, all-consuming, all-desiring. But I touched her lightly, for had I not divined that she was but a somnambulist, and that a too rough awakening would make her drop from my arms?

"I have felt as though waves of my blood were spread under her feet so that she should glide gently through life; I have felt how each one of my thoughts went out to fill her brain, how my words became hers, how my soul lived in hers, making of it a marvellous chamber full of light. It was as though—as though—we had become one: she was the body, the perfect form fashioned by the hands of God; and I was the spirit—the thought, the spark that— Ah! But she never realized it. And one day a miracle came to pass."

Gorromo paused; his wonderful eyes filled with a strange exultation. The monk stared at him; and so fascinated was he by the sad man's words that for a while he forgot his own trouble.

"One day," continued Gorromo, "a cripple child came with its mother up to this house. I know not

whence they had wandered nor why they had come. Glava was standing in the sunshine, playing with a sword that she loves. I was glorying in her extraordinary beauty, and my soul felt very near God. She—was out in the sunlight. I—lay in the shade of the house. But only the window was between us, and I loved her—loved her with passionate love—”

Again Gorromo paused and breathed heavily, as though oppressed.

“Go on,” said the monk, touching his hand; and his breath also came in gasps.

“I loved her,” continued Gorromo. “And as she bent over the cripple, asking the mother what ailed it, there came to me the sudden irresistible conviction that if only Glava would lay her hands upon the child it would rise cured from the ground. I felt that my love was so tremendous that it was more than usual love—that it could not but fill Glava with a power beyond the power of earthly beings. And at that moment I prayed so earnestly, I put such a mighty belief into my petition to the heavens above, that it was as though some unknown strength went out from my soul to the soul of the girl I loved. And as in a dream I saw Glava take the child in her arms, press it to her heart. And suddenly the child stood up straight and strong—and well.

“A cloud came over me then. And afterwards, later—I know not when—Glava was leaning over me

with tears on her face, and she was telling me of some great joy, of some miracle that had taken place. The child had gone away singing—singing! And then it had run down the mountain path chasing a sky-blue butterfly.

“But I had Glava’s hands in mine, and it was as though something within me had melted; as though part of my soul had floated away to God. I felt quite light and tremendously happy. And Glava bent down to kiss me—to kiss me on my lips—”

Gaetano’s hand had closed down over Gorromio’s burning palm, and both men sat for a while wordless, peering into the obscurity; but their fingers were entwined, and it was as though each heard the beating of the other’s heart.

The door opened very softly, and Volona appeared with a candle in her hand. Its small light wavered in the darkness like a golden moth. “The storm is over,” said the old servant, “but the night is going to be very dark.” Bending over the fire, she threw a log into the flames; then, straightening herself, she went over to where the two men were looking at her and set her light down on the table. “She sees in the dark,” continued the old woman, almost as though she were talking to herself, “and Focco never makes a mistake. I think that the stars will be her sisters—but I am pleased that the clouds have stopped weeping, or she would have been very wet.”

“Thou hast belief in her return, Volona?” asked Gorromio, looking into her stern old face. Volona

stood in her habitual attitude, her hands on her hips, staring out into the dark.

"Yes, she will come back," said the old woman slowly. "The crows will all be flying in one direction, so I know she will come back."

"Dost thou continue to read thy signs in the sky, Volona?"

"One will be trusting what has never deceived one," answered Volona, "and the skies will have taught me more truths, I am thinking, than the tongues of men." Then, turning to Gaetano, who was sitting with his head buried in his hands, she inquired with kind gruffness: "It is weary thou art, and perhaps thou art hungry. I will be setting food before thee, and I think thou wilt eat."

"I have walked many miles," answered the monk, "and I am thirsty." Then, turning to Gorromio: "But I want to hear the end of thy tale," he said. "Was the miracle followed by other miracles?"

"Yes," said Gorromio; "and Volona can tell thee how strange it was!"

"And it will be about Glava that ye are talking," said Volona. "Ay, ay, and like unto a river they came, and all of them, as I am knowing, went away satisfied, healed, or consoled. And her fame it was that spread from mouth to mouth, till in legions they came, and none was ever for doubting her power, and it was revering her they were, for a saint."

"And was the power not hers?" asked the monk, turning to the old servant.

"I am thinking it was not hers," was the laconic reply.

"Whose was it, then?"

Volona raised a large, bony finger and, pointing toward Gorromomo, said in a solemn voice: "The power lay in his love, I am thinking! His immense belief in Glava's perfection it was that brought the miracle to pass. Faith removeth mountains, it is said; he was the flame, she the altar, God the hand. When Glava heals, she will not be knowing what language she is speaking: it will be my lord Gorromomo's words that will be coming from her tongue."

A heavy silence ensued. The old, bony finger was still pointed at Gorromomo, but the man on the couch had covered his face with his hands.

"After the pilgrims will have departed," continued Volona, "Glava will be coming back with the smile of a child. But my lord Gorromomo it is who lies pale on his cushions, as though the blood had all gone from his heart. Glava will be a golden casket, I am thinking, but my lord Gorromomo fills it with light."

"I shall never fill it again," said Gorromomo dully. "What is past is past; another light must now show her the way."

Volona turned toward the fire and, staring into the flame, said as though speaking to herself: "It is a woman she is. We wanted to treat her as a being apart. But I am thinking that Nature will not have it at all, at all. She will be for claiming her own."

"Four years of terrible, pulsing, fear-filled happiness," said Gorrommo. "I knew it could not last, but it was my life; I clung to it, I hoped against hope. But now—"

"May the White Peace be with thee!" said old Volona, going toward him and laying her hand on his heart. "Inscrutable are the ways of the Lord, and Love has its killing pain; but beyond the Ultimate Gates there is freedom, I am thinking—there is Rest, there is Peace. A shore there is beyond the land of defeated dreams, where those that have wept overmuch here upon earth shall stand up facing the sunrise, with a white flame round their foam-pale brows, looking into a radiance where Sorrow is as a thing that never was!"

As she pronounced these strange words the humble old servant seemed to have risen to unwonted dignity. Even her tongue had lost its quainter manner of speech, to become like the tongues of those who can see beyond the veils of this world. For a moment she stood upright, tall and strong, whilst the single candle cast lurid lights over her gaunt form. In wonder the two men stared at her, but neither spoke. Then, suddenly, something like a shudder ran through her bones, and she became old Volona once more, the humble Volona who did humble work.

"Food will I bring you," she said in her habitual somewhat grumbling tones. "But don't be upsetting yourselves with unnecessary talk. It looks more like rest that ye both will be needing than talk." And,

after having bent down to put more fuel on the fire, Volona left the room.

“Ah! but I need to talk,” said Gaetano, resuming his place. “It is as though all my life I had not talked to human heart!”

“Mine is listening,” said Gorrommo, touching lightly the stranger’s hand. “The night may be long, and I always wait—”

“Tell me,” asked the monk, “who is the old woman whose tongue was so wise?”

“She is old Volona, Glava’s nurse.”

“Has she always been with her?”

“Yes.”

“And how didst thou come to this place?”

For a moment Gorrommo did not answer; then, with an effort, he said: “Once I was a huntsman pursuing big game, a loiterer loving both day and night; my fancy led me either here or there; no one had a right to step between me and the sun. Of ancient blood am I, kin to the great ones of this earth; my father rules in a distant land. But that is a thing of the past.” Gorrommo sighed, passing his frail hand over his brow; then he resumed: “Ever did the mountains attract me; their great peaks seemed to promise me curious revelations, a mystery seemed hidden in their strength, a spell I could not resist drew me toward them. And now I know—it was my Fate: The revelation was Glava; the mystery was Love; the hidden strength was Pain and the near Shadow of Death—”

Faint was Gorromo's voice; the monk had to lean close to him to catch his words. But the sick man's wonderful eyes had taken possession of Gaetano's rebellious heart.

"It was in pursuing her that I came to grief," said Gorromo after a short silence. "I fell with my horse from an awful height. It was night. I had followed her for several days; she always fled from me, leading me farther and farther from trodden tracks. The point of her spear shone in the dark like a star; like silver bells was her laugh, pale as the moon her marvellous face. Her stallion gave forth a phosphorescent shine. It was winter; the snow was white—exceeding white was the snow and so luminous that a radiance rose from off the ground, as though the whole world were encircled by a halo of light. A glorious night—a night for happiness, for prayer, for achievement. It brought me near unto death. But when my eyes opened to the dawn they also opened to Love. Love was bending over me; I was lying in the arms of Love.

"I had outstripped my companions, and it was many hours before they found us. Glava's voice led them to the place where she was holding me against her heart. In the dark had she climbed down to where I lay, and all night long had she bedded my head on her knees, thinking I was dead.

"There are hours when life and death quiver so close side by side that the brain no more clearly realizes if it be in this world or in the next; some pains

are so strong that they almost turn to ecstasy—one knows not if it be the stars of heaven that one sees or the chasms of hell.”

“But thou hast lived, thou hast lived!” cried the monk. “Some from the beginning are condemned to stand apart as though dead!”

Gorromo looked very tenderly at the young passion-distraught face. Handsome it was, but harrowed by inner conflicts, the features pinched and strangely pale like flowers grown in places where the sun never shines. The eyes were sunken, and dark lines marked the skin around them. There was something of a child and yet of an old man about him which was painful to observe. Gorromo felt himself in presence of a misery different from his own. This man’s soul, not his body, was maimed.

“Brother,” said Gorromo very gently, “a great error runs through the world. Each man believes that life is a garden created for his special pleasure, and that all the flowers therein are flowers for his hand to pluck. If he could learn to become gardener only—a gardener whose every effort tends toward surrounding their growth, their beauty, their perfecting, without any selfish desire of possession, he would see life in its truer proportions. I have lain here for years, immovable, a head without a body; and there is no road upon which my thoughts have not travelled. Therefore do I speak to thee as I have never yet spoken to man. I have gone to the end of every hope, and from every hope have I come back.

“I hoped to recover, to stand up again one day well and strong. I hoped to hold fast my love. But day by day I had to learn that it was a treasure to which I had but a passing right. I hoped not to suffer; but I suffered every torture both of body and mind. I hoped to be brave in my sufferings; but I was weak and complained like a child. I hoped to die; but I live to see what was more than life to me perish and fade, and all the tremendous force of adoration I had within me could not keep it alive. Hours of fearful revolt have I known—hours when the worm cut in two by the passing foot of the labourer was less ignoble than I. But God remained smiling in his skies, and Glava—Glava passed on as though carried by invisible wings toward a glory in which I shall never share.

“And now—and now—I see that I was but the gardener whose care made a flower bloom to its utmost perfection—a flower that another will pluck!”

Gorrommo turned his face into his cushions and moaned like a stricken man. “And thou thinkest perchance, because I am a cripple, a body more dead than alive, that I can suffer no more; that I ought to be resigned. But I tell thee that, at certain hours, every devil-devised torture creeps into my heart, to call up all my vilest instincts, to stir up from their depth enemies I did not think to possess. And then I see pictures better left untold. But this is not always—”

Gorrommo stopped talking for a moment. Then he

turned to the monk, and a very wonderful expression came into his martyr's face. "At times I can lie very still, and then it is to me as though I free my soul from the casket that holds it fast. At those moments I become as light as air. I seem to be floating in some ineffable radiance, and by its shine I can see beyond the limits of human understanding. The storm is suddenly stilled, and I see other proportions—the real ones, those that God has measured. And I understand that I am but an infinitesimal part of something larger, greater, in which my passion, my sorrow, my love, dwindle to nothing. I am part of the Great Light itself, just a tiny spark that has been lent human form so as to prove that each smallest particle of that Great Radiance can light a human brain before it returns to its ultimate home.

"Ah!" cried Gorromio, "at those moments I feel so passionless, so purified, so beyond human frailty, I am so convinced of my higher origin, that I could take Glava by the hand and myself give her to the man she loves. And I could smile the while—yes, I could smile even when she lays her lips upon another's lips, and I could bless her with the light of God in my heart!"

Gorromio lifted his two transparent hands toward some invisible vision, and a holy radiance illumined his face.

For a moment deepest silence filled the chamber. It was almost as though an angel were passing through the room. Then, suddenly, Gaetano fell on

his knees by the couch; and, hiding his face in the folds that covered Gorromo's useless body, he sobbed as though his heart would break.

"Yes, weep," said Gorromo, laying his hand on the young man's head. "Weep, weep—tears can wipe much away; weep! There are hours when man must become as humble as a child at its mother's knee. Didst thou not come to find a woman, to tear from her something she was not ready to give? With one draught thou didst hope to quench the thirst of all thy life; but God frustrated the plan and cast thee together with a brother-sufferer, that thou shouldst taste of tears not thine own. Thou didst come toward the Voice on the Mountain only to find a voice that rises from the depth of sorrow, toward a different height."

"It seems to me," sobbed the monk, "that I have found the Voice on the Mountain; but I feel that I am not cured—I am only lifted by thy radiance into a purer sphere. Thy voice and thy suffering have raised me beyond myself. Thy wisdom is the wisdom of one who has tasted of every source and drunk at every spring. But I—I have put no cup to my lips, and can a man go thus through life? Answer, answer! What comfort canst thou give me? Speak!"

But Gaetano received no answer; for at that moment the door was suddenly pushed open, and Glava stood on the threshold—Glava, the woman whom both of them loved. The fog floated into the cham-

ber with her, so that she stood enveloped by a veil of mystery that made her more than ever a being apart—more goddess than woman, more dream than flesh and blood. Her hand upon the latch, she paused as though in hesitation, and the flames from off the hearth lit up the mist that surrounded her, so that she stood in a fairy halo that enhanced her mystical beauty, giving an unearthly radiance to her face.

Gaetano and Gorromo stared at her as though both had been struck dumb. Glava made a step forward, shutting the door behind her; the water dripped from her drenched garments, which clung to her body, revealing its perfection to the fascinated gaze of the two men. Throwing up her head, the girl spoke first.

“An unwonted guest do I find in our house,” she said, and her glorious voice, the voice that moved human hearts, filled the silent chamber as with waves of harmony. “The night has been stormy,” she continued, “but the day—the day was full of light.”

“Glava,” said Gorromo, stretching out his hand toward her, “we have been longing for thee, and we thank thee for having come back.”

Glava advanced toward that pale welcoming hand; like one in a dream she went toward it. But when she reached it, she did not clasp it. It was as though she no more saw it—it was as though Glava had become a stranger in the small stone house.

“The way up to the summit is steep,” said Glava, “and it was only here on the heights that the storm

caught hold of us. Focco and I had to fight our way."

Like a faded leaf Gorromó's hand had fallen, unnoticed, back upon his cover. An overpowering longing came over him to cry out his pain. He felt as though he must die unless Glava's lips were laid upon his as in the days that were no more. For a moment his voice failed him; but, making a tremendous effort that seemed to tear his soul asunder, he said with an almost steady voice: "The storm has drenched thee, Glava. Let not the chill get into thy bones: go and change thy garments. But if thou art not weary, Glava, come back. Long is the road Gaetano has made toward thee—Gaetano, our guest."

"Every guest is welcome beneath our roof," said Glava, "and I hope that the holy brother will rest within its shelter this night." And, turning once more, "I shall come back," she added, using the words that once had had quite another meaning—words that now pierced Gorromó's heart as with the two-edged blade of a sword.

The door had closed behind her. The two men were alone once more. But Gaetano, with sudden understanding, had turned his eyes away from Gorromó's face.

XVI

*Somewhere there is an end to everything
and the liveness of the dark is one's own.
Tagore.*

VOLONA was spreading the evening repast. Curious it was how softly the gaunt woman could move about. The strange household amongst the clouds had no servants except Volona and a youth who did rougher work, but Volona never allowed any other to enter the large chamber where her master lay on his couch. She had placed a small table near the sick man's bed, and plates were being laid for three. Golden were the goblets which the old woman stood in the centre—golden, and of strangely fine work—but Volona, when asked whence she had them, would only shake her head.

With large eyes Gorromio followed her movements. Her presence seemed to soothe him, but mortal suffering was imprinted on the sick man's face.

"Not too many candles, I pray thee," begged Gorromio as the old servant began to light the tapers which she had placed here and there about the room. "Better it were this night not to look too closely into the eyes we love."

Volona bent down and blew out the candle which she had just lighted. "And maybe it is wise that

thou art, my Lord Gorrom, but my old heart is heavy that it must see this day so soon."

"Hast thou always awaited it, Volona?"

"And it may be," said Volona, "that I have awaited it, but when the hour of darkness cometh it is always too soon."

"But for her the hour is not darkness, Volona."

"Ay, ay, sure thou sayest rightly for her—it is not dark."

"Volona, didst thou mark how bright were her eyes?"

"Ay, ay, my dear one, it will be the reflection of the sun she has kept within them, for did she not say that it was sunny down there?"

"How far dost think that she wandered?"

"My lord Gorrom," said Volona sadly, "little does the distance matter, I am thinking. A little way is already far, when it leads away from our hearts."

"And think ye that she will never return?"

"The way that leads backward is strewn with cinders," said the wise old tongue. "And if I am seeing rightly, Glava will only return when she has emptied her cup."

"How would she then return, Volona?"

"With bowed head and bleeding feet, I am thinking," said Volona solemnly. "But then she would be finding this nest empty, for sure neither thou nor I can be standing a vigil that would kill our hearts."

"If it is with bowed head that she would return, Volona, then may she never come back! Our Glava

must always walk in the sunlight with the step of a Queen whom fear has never touched."

"Ay, ay," said the old woman, shaking her head, "and sure it is beyond thyself that thou art loving her; and maybe by different roads old Volona and her master have reached the same truth."

"Of what truth art thou speaking, Volona?"

"My Lord will be knowing of what truth I am speaking?" said Volona, bending down to smooth a lock of hair from his brow.

Gorromomo seized the old woman's hand with sudden fierceness: "Who is she?" he asked. "Wilt thou never tell me who she is? And why she knows neither mother nor father, neither sin nor trouble, wisdom nor fear?"

But the old woman, drawing herself up, laid a finger on her lips. The door had opened softly, and Glava was standing in the room. Golden was her dress, and gleaming were her eyes; black as night the long plaits that fell down over her back; and, as she advanced toward Gorromomo, she appeared to his love-sick heart bright as a holy flame come down from the skies.

"Glava," he cried with the old tender greeting that had always been his, "Glava, Glava, Glava my love!"

But Glava was looking beyond him; her eyes were fixed upon the window, and round her forehead lay a wreath of bright blue flowers—flowers that grew not upon mountain-tops.

Volona, watching Gorromomo's face, suddenly bent

down and blew out the taper which she had placed on the table at his side.

"The sun will shine again tomorrow," said Glava like some one who follows up an inner thought. "Was the storm very angry here about the lone stone house?"

"The wind, the rain, and the clouds were calling for Glava," said Gorromo, and Volona marvelled how steady was his voice.

"Was the sea covered with white horses?" asked Glava. "And did the breakers dash against the rocks beneath?"

"Yes," said Volona. "The Sea-King was full of wrath; and old Jan, he was declaring that he heard the voices of drowned lovers crying from their watery beds."

"Are there many drowned lovers?" asked Glava.

"Sure and every day some love is dying," answered Volona. "But for all I am knowing it will not always be needing a watery grave at all, at all."

"What will it be needing?" asked Glava, still in a dreamy voice.

"Sometimes it will be needing but a word, a look, or a gesture, I am thinking, and the sad wind will have become richer of another voice."

Glava had seated herself by the table. Taking within her hand one of the golden goblets, she looked at it. Then she started like some one who suddenly awakes: "But have we not a guest this evening?" she inquired. "Is not the white-frocked monk in our

house?" And a sweet smile spread like sunshine over Glava's face.

"Child, child!" grumbled her nurse, "is it only now that thou art remembering? In truth thou art strange this evening. Thy mind will be wandering upon distant shores, and thou hast never even asked if my Lord Gorromo's pain be less sore!"

Slowly Glava raised her eyes to look at the man whose heart she was breaking, and it was to her as though she were looking through a veil, heavy with tears. It was the first time since her return that night that she had looked full into his face; and as she did so something within her struggled for freedom, something that once had been able to sing, some song that longed to rise to her lips—some word, some name, some sensation which she had once known long ago—long ago. . . .

And Gorromo, watching her expression, knew that his hour of darkness had come. Laying his hand upon hers, he said with a voice that might have been that of a mother: "Do not struggle, Glava—be at peace. I have no pain. I am well, Glava—well and happy. For hast thou not—hast thou not put on thy golden dress?"

Glava did not answer. But suddenly something caught at her throat, and two large tears rolled down over her cheeks; rolled like dew-drops falling from a flower that some hand has touched.

"Go, I pray thee, and call Gaetano," said Gorromo to Volona. "Poor has been our hospitality, and we

know not from how far he has come." And Volona, obedient to her master's request, left the room.

Glava sat, her face turned away from her lover, who gazed at her as the emigrant might gaze at the retreating shores of a beloved home which he is quitting for ever. Then the door opened, and Gaetano came toward them on noiseless feet. He moved with downcast eyes, his hands hidden in his sleeves in the attitude customary to those of his cloth; and yet, as he glided over the floor, there was something in his gait that might have been compared to that of a panther shut up in a cage. But when he raised his head, to perceive Glava all golden in her gown, he drew back as though afraid.

Glava rose to greet him, tall and splendid like the torch of life; and, unable to face such radiance, Gaetano again cast his eyes to the ground. Here in this taper-lit chamber she was another being than out yonder amongst the wild grey clouds.

Gorromio, in the overfulness of his aching heart, felt an immense compassion for the stranger, who from the outset had been debarred from the joys and sorrows of life; but Glava was looking at him and her eyes were like a soft caress.

"Where hast thou been since last I met thee?" asked the maiden.

"I have been waiting," answered the monk.

"We are always waiting," said Glava in a curious voice; and Gorromio, watching her, wondered where were her thoughts.

“I waited amongst rocks and beneath trees,” continued the monk with eyes downcast. “Once some shepherds had pity on me; for three days I lay exhausted in their shelter, where they gave me food and washed the wounds of my feet. But these mountains are very lonely; it is seldom that one hears a human voice.”

“There are many voices in the mountains,” said Gorromó, “but it is only by slow degrees that one learns to know them. I have learnt them one by one.”

Volona had come into the room with a steaming dish in her hands, and, hearing her master’s words: “And it is plenty of time it is my Lord has had for listening,” she said, “for have not his vigils been lonely and long?”

“Sometimes they have been long,” said Gorromó; “very, very, long.”

Glava had filled the young monk’s plate with the food which Volona had brought. In thanking her he lifted his eyes; and it was as if having let them rest on her beauty, he could take them from it no more. “Thy gown,” said the holy brother suddenly, “resembles the mantle with which we used to deck the immaculate Virgin in days that are past. But her smile would never lend itself to my adoration, and her eyes were never like thine except once—”

“Tell me,” said Glava, “when her eyes were like mine?”

But the monk hesitated, as one unaccustomed to express his thoughts.

"Tell us," said Gorromo in his beautiful, calm voice.

"It was in the month of flowers," said the monk, folding his hands; "Mary's month. And after a procession in her honour, we had stood her in the inner court. There she smiled down upon our adoration from a rose-entwined altar, her hands crossed over her heart. It was night; like ghosts the white columns of the cloister stood round the square, keeping vigil with the tall cypresses that sent their dark shafts high up into the skies, like pillars of smoke from altars that God had blessed. Yes, it was night; the last prayers had been said in the chapel, the last chants sung. And now the hour for rest had come, but with it no peace to my heart. So I bethought myself of Mary who stood in lonely aloofness in the white-stone court, and with her did I seek refuge beneath the star-lit sky. Rose-crowned was her head, roses hung in long garlands from her mantle, roses were spread beneath her feet, roses shed their petals in showers over her dagger-pierced heart, and roses were dropping in fading sweetness to the ground where I knelt. Their perfume filled the still night air, and from somewhere out of the shadows a nightingale was singing to its love. That day I had seen the first lily bloom in our garden-plot. This lily had I plucked to bring as an offering to the only woman

who had ever smiled down upon our brotherhood of ascetic hungry-eyed monks—”

Gaetano broke off suddenly as though overwhelmed by some remembrance that made his breath come short.

“Oh! the glamour of that night,” he continued, “the scent of the flowers, the beauty of the indigo sky! And oh! the mystic radiance that seemed to surround the Virgin’s cloak. The nightingale sang and sang as though its life depended upon that song. Somewhere in the distance a fountain was splashing; the sound of the water was a soft accompaniment for the bird’s sweet notes. Before the Virgin two tapers were burning; tall and slim, they carried their small lights like holy crowns—crowns which they were offering to the Mother of God. As I knelt before her, they lit up the lower part of her visage. I could just see her half-open lips, her soft rounded chin, the straight line of her nose. But her eyes were in the dark—they were but two holes without life. Burying my head in my hands, I prayed, I prayed long, I prayed desperately; I know not what words I said, nor what were the petitions with which I wearied the Virgin’s ears—I only know that my heart seemed to be bleeding its sorrow and suffering there at her feet. . . .

Suddenly I looked up—I know not why—and it was as though a miracle had come to pass. The moon had risen high in the sky and stood so that it poured all its radiance over Mary’s holy face. And

her eyes were looking at me—looking at me, filled with heavenly light!”

The monk rose suddenly from the table and, going over to the fire, with averted face continued hurriedly in a husky voice: “Some madness took hold of me then—some madness for which I cannot account! On to the rose-wound altar did I climb, crushing the flowers under my hands, my knees, and my feet; yes, I crushed them, and they in self-defence wounded me with their thorns, staining my cowl with blood. But on to the altar I scrambled, and there beneath the cold rays of the moon I kissed the Mother of God—I kissed her! And in my madness I thought that she gave back my kisses one by one.

“Then something terrible happened. All of a sudden I stood in leaping light! The tapers, outraged by the sacrilege which I had committed, had set fire to my frock, turning my holy dress into a flaming torch. Letting myself drop from the altar, I began running through the gardens, through the stone passages, down the cloisters; running, running as one possessed. And the flames ran with me, lapping at my life with tongues that were roaring-red. I ran and ran till I dropped.

“I know not how it all ended, nor where they picked me up; but a great miracle had all the same come to pass. For when they carried me back to my lonely cell, my garments fell in blackened shreds to the ground, but my sinful body stood up unharmed—no

wound upon it except the scratches from the roses which I had crushed."

Gaetano had sunk upon his knees by the hearth; bending his head very low, he humbly pressed his forehead to the floor.

Glava rose from where she was sitting. Going over to him, she raised him gently from his crouching attitude and led him like a child back to his seat. Then, leaning over him, she pressed her two hands against his burning brow and bent his head back till it lay on her bosom. But Gorromo, who had been looking at them, turned away, closing his eyes.

A heavy silence filled the chamber. Glava was smiling a strange smile, but her eyes were looking beyond the walls of the small stone house. For her the silence was alive with thoughts that came like holy doves right out of the centre of her heart. It was with the hands of a mother that she was soothing the young man's fevered pain; but Gaetano, as he leaned there against her heaving bosom, prayed that God might let him die.

Suddenly Glava's voice rose crystal-clear through the night. "I am thinking," she said, "of how many weary feet move over the earth, of how many hands must be seeking for treasures they do not find!" And bending down, she pressed her fresh lips upon the eyes of the monk. "There must be hours in each man's life," she continued, "when the wanderer suddenly is at rest—when some sort of oasis takes him

within its shade. But the moment of moving on again must be hard, very hard—”

Gaetano hardly dared breathe, so afraid was he that this wonderful being would thrust him forth from the paradise which he had so suddenly reached. But Glava was hardly aware of what she was fondling. Her hands needed to caress, and something which she could not overstep separated her from the man whom she had once thought to love.

Gorromo had again turned toward her. Fascinated, he gazed at those strong white hands the touch of which he knew so well, so well. The mortal pain within his bosom was such that he wondered to what an extent human hearts can suffer without breaking. He longed for her voice, and yet with each word that she spoke it was as though she were draining his veins drop by drop of their blood.

“The world is full of sunshine,” came again Glava’s sweet voice, “and I never dreamt that so many flowers could grow out of the earth, and that they could be blue—as blue as though the sky had fallen to the ground.”

Gorromo listened, holding his breath; Glava was dreaming, Glava had quite forgotten where she was.

“I never knew,” continued the maiden, “how sweetly the birds could sing, and how many roads lead toward the valleys; nor had I realized how the little streams grow when they flow downward, and how their waters become calm as though they were

always coming nearer and nearer to something they love."

Volona had noiselessly entered the room; and, as she looked from one face to the other, her wise old soul understood. But upon Gorromo's visage her gaze dared not linger, for verily no eye should enter the unguarded sanctuary of a man's breaking heart. Again Glava was talking, and like the two others Volona stood listening. It was as though a song were coming from the girl's glorious young throat.

"The world is wide," said Glava, "much, much wider than I ever thought; but man's wants are manifold. And so many prayers have they already brought to me, to so many complaints have mine ears already listened! All their needs and desires have they thrown at my feet like waters falling from breaking clouds. And I was almost indifferent; I hardly understood, till suddenly my soul awoke to a need in them that answered some need in my own throbbing heart. Then it was like the meeting of two rivers: the waters flowed together, forming but one."

But now Volona advanced into the chamber, her hands full of ripe red fruit. "And it is into a trance that our Glava's voice has been singing you both, for sure," she grumbled. "My child, I pray thee, take these apples from my hands, or surely they will be falling to the ground."

Glava started, and Gaetano, opening his eyes, slowly returned to earth.

"And your plates are only half empty," scolded Volona, fussing about the table. "And for what, may I be asking, has old Volona tired her back over the fire at all, at all? Only to see the good food wasted? Nay, nay, and a shame it would be."

Glava, obedient to her old nurse's request, took the apples from her. Like scarlet light they lay between her fingers. Verily Glava resembled a priestess bringing ripe fruit to a temple for sacrifice. The taper on the table was reflected many times in her golden gown; it seemed alive with dancing light. The three others gazed at her beauty as though they had never seen it before.

Suddenly she laid the fruit down and stood listening. "Wist ye," she said with an inspired look, "that tomorrow when the sun will be high, they will all be coming up the mountain in search of me—all of them with their many hopes and desires, with their complaints and their woes? Hark! Do you not hear as it were the sound of many feet and the hubbub of many voices that will not be stilled?" And, raising her hand to her ear, Glava leaned forward with half-open lips. So full of glamour was each one of Glava's movements that those in her presence were ever again caught in her spell; holding their breath, the other three listened till they also could almost hear the rumour of crowds advancing toward the house.

"I shall need all my strength tomorrow; I feel it. I think I shall need more strength than I have ever

needed before—but I know not why.” Then, all at once, turning to Gorromomo, she fixed her large eyes on his face. “Gorromomo! Art thou ready?” she asked. “Art thou ready, Gorromomo?” Glava knew not why she said these words. They seemed to rise all unconsciously from inner depths over which she had no control.

But Gorromomo answered her call, sinking his gaze into hers. And as he did so, he knew that he was looking for the last time into her eyes; and in that supreme communion with the sleeping strength of her soul, he also felt that it was for the last time that he was filling her with his love—filling her to overflowing. In great waves of adoration his passion mounted toward her, like the altar that sends its flames straight up into the sky. In that moment Gorromomo knew that his end was at hand.

“I am ready, Glava,” he said, answering her question; “ready for all that is to come.”

And Glava, as he said it, leaned toward him as though to give him her lips in thanks. But, just before they touched him, she suddenly drew back; and, shading her eyes with her fingers as one who is dazzled by a light, Glava turned and fled from the room.

Gorromomo remained without movement, his eyes wide open like those of one who tries to hold fast a vision upon which his life depends. On his brow the sweat stood in drops like glistening tears.

Volona, putting a warning finger to her lips,

beckoned to the monk, who stood like a lost spirit, understanding naught of what he had seen; and, taking him by the hand, she silently led him away.

Volona knew that it was best to leave Gorromio, in his hour of darkness, alone with God.

XVII

*Love seems too great for this earth; the
strife*

Is worse than death and more than life.

IT was the sun that awoke Glava next morning; it was the sun that brought her the message that there were still many days of light for her upon earth. He kissed her lids and bade her awake. And Glava awoke—awoke to the new day that had come. Tall and full of strength she rose, and, drawing her curtain aside, let the light fall over her in a warm cascade. Lifting her arms above her head, she stretched her lissom body and laughed. Glava laughed because the sun was shining, because the storm was a thing of the past, because down in the valleys yonder the flowers were blue—blue as the Virgin's mantle on the day of All Saints. And Glava knew that the world was hers for the asking, and that Love had a wondrous face.

Somewhere beneath her gladness there crouched, no doubt, a sensation of pain—for is it not thus with things belonging to earth? A shadow lies at the root of the flower even when it gazes enraptured into the heart of the sun. Golden is its face because of the kiss it is receiving, but darkness lies awaiting

its hour—and knows that its hour will come. But this morning pain had not yet awoken in the maiden's heart. Therefore the song which she sang was a song of great joy, bubbling almost unconsciously from her lips:

And it is the song of tomorrow
That I am singing,
The song that sleeps in my heart;
And it is the joy of tomorrow
That is ringing,
The joy that will show me my path!
The wind and the rain with their fury
Have driven all sorrow away,
The sun in his glory is rising
To show me an endless way.

Then Glava took the sword that lay by her bed, held it up to the new-born radiance, and, flashing it about like lightning in a storm-swept sky, sang:

The light that lives in this metal
Is the light once held by the morn.
It lives, it laughs, it remembers
The heights where its power was born.
It knows of unreachable splendours
To which my joy shall take flight
But today 'tis my hand that renders
Its light so wondrous and bright.

Glava sang like a bird that knows not what it sings, and the words came to her carried upon the wings

of hope. And whenever she felt joy coursing like fire through her blood, Glava needed the companionship of her sword. It was as though its shining blade were a link with a life of heroic deeds in which she never had a part. Glava might have been a daughter of kings—one of those beings whose births are greeted by armed legions that proclaim their rising glory, remembering victories which their fathers' fathers have won. The sound of steel was music to Glava's ears, and the beautiful maiden could throw a spear as straight as any man.

The door opened softly, and Volona stood looking at her with eyes brim full of love—and indeed the hearts of the gods themselves would have been gladdened by such a sight.

"And sure an early hour it is for the handling of a sword," scolded the old nurse, "and it is everything else she will be forgetting in the joy of her flashing blade."

"What else am I forgetting?" cried Glava. And, tossing back the thick waves of her hair, she lowered her sword to look at her nurse.

"Ah! me, ah! me, and if it be not thy heart that remembers, then sure my words were lost!"

"Remember what? remember what?" asked Glava, seizing the old woman by the hand.

"The look of those eyes downstairs."

Glava remained silent a moment. Her own eyes assumed the inward expression which Volona knew

so well. It was as though many pictures were passing before Glava's brain.

"Joy must rise above sorrow," she said at last. "Is it not Spring that overcomes Winter, and the rising sun that defeats the darkness of night?"

"And sad it is for sure to be winter," said Volona, "or the darkness of night."

"For all that," said Glava almost fiercely, "one must go toward light. And perchance, for having lived so long amongst shadows, its glory has burst upon me more wondrously bright."

A strange expression of yearning tenderness came over the old woman's face. Was it a longing to take the lovely maiden in her arms? Or was it perhaps because of some blessed remembrance at which she was looking back? Who can say? But suddenly her harsh features softened, and gentle beyond recognition was the voice in which she said: "And it will be a light, I am thinking, that shines but once in a woman's life."

"Volona, who art thou?" cried Glava, throwing her arms suddenly round her nurse's neck. "Who art thou, and who am I, and why do we live in this house?"

"And it may be a shadow that I am," said Volona; "a thing that once had a voice, a soul—yea, and even a face; a creature who has lived by a law not of its own making, but sure a law it is that has bowed many a head. But thou—!" and, taking

Glava by the shoulders, she turned her toward the full light. "But thou, thou art of those that conquer, I am thinking; of those upon whom the gods have put their kiss. And it is as the star of the morning that thou wilt be carrying joy on thy brow, so that all sorrow should turn from thee, leaving thy feet to wander through nothing but light!"

Then something quite unexpected, something never before known, came to pass: Volona laid her old head down upon Glava's shoulders and sobbed as if her heart would break. Glava, with the expression of a child meeting a difficulty, pressed the dear old servant to her bosom, at a loss to know what words to say; for Volona's tears were no less a miracle than waters suddenly bursting from a desert rock. Solemn indeed is the moment when those whom we imagined as being without frailty suddenly give way, revealing depths of either sorrow or weakness of which we had never dreamed; and Glava, being accustomed to lean upon the impersonal courage of her only friend, felt like a vessel which, having lost its rudder, drifts upon foreign seas.

"But thou hast not yet told me who thou art, Volona! Dear old Volona! Thou who hast never forsaken me—who, ever at my side, hast dried my tears, forgiven my errors, listened to my vagaries, ever greeting my home-coming with the same loving smile."

"I am thy nurse," said Volona, lifting a tear-

stained face. "And sure and sure, what should I be but thine old, old nurse?"

For a few minutes the two women stood locked in each other's arms, all distance between them effaced. The old servant it was who first looked up. "And sure it is ashamed I am! Ought an old woman to be crying like a child at all, at all? See! the sun is calling, and I am thinking that I hear Focco stamping the ground, impatient to be off. But let it not be far that thou goest this day, my Glava. For it will be a feeling I am having—a feeling that something will come to pass. So, a promise I am wanting of thee—a promise that today thou wilt not run away."

"I promise," said Glava solemnly. "I promise that it shall not be today that I leave thee. No, not today!"

The heavens had not decreed that Glava should ride far that morning.

The air was fresh after the rain which had washed the earth overnight. Like a pure draught of water it came to Glava's lips, filling her lungs with new life. Her eyes reflected the sky in deeper tones, like untroubled waters in the Garden of Paradise. The damp rocks glistened, and the little mountain-flowers lifted their heads all covered with dew. Glava smiled at them and loved them. It was not tears that she thought to see on their leaves, but many, many diamonds—diamonds in sparkling radiance,

covering half the world. Focco pranced, danced, and capered, snorting through his wide-open nostrils, conscious of carrying a burden he loved. The sun used his shining flanks as a mirror, drew sparks from his ruddy mane. Glava laid her cheek against the polished curve of his neck; and the noble creature seemed to understand the maiden as though both had been born of the same proud race.

To a lone grim rock did Focco carry his mistress; to a rock which overlooked the valley like a fortress built by giant hands; a fortress which the gods had sanctioned and which the passing centuries had modelled with patient hands. Like a monarch proudly contemplating lands which he has overthrown, Glava sat her stallion looking down upon the world at her feet. But the thoughts of the maiden were humble, for were they not quickening with a new-born passion which she longed to cast at a strong man's feet? And, as always when her heart was over-full, Glava lifted up her voice and sang—sang to the skies, sang to the clouds, sang to the breezes that fanned her face—sang whatever words came to her tongue:

My heart is singing
As the bells are ringing,
Ringing for my love:
There is no knowing,
Where sorrow is going,
Going as a snow-white dove.

The winds are blowing,
The tides are flowing,
Flowing towards my love;
In all things living,
My great joy is ringing,
Ringing from the skies above.

Focco shook his mane and tossed up his head, stamping the rock. But still Glava sang:

Pain is calling,
The dews are falling,
Falling like tears to the ground;
But my soul has awoken,
The chains are broken,
Broken, and joy has been found.

When the day darkens,
My lone spirit hearkens,
Hearkens for a voice above;
For a word left unspoken,
For a door that will open,
Open to lead me to love.

The last words came like a great cry of longing, and Glava repeated the last two lines:

For a door that will open,
Open to lead me to love.

And, as she stretched out her arms, it was as though Glava actually saw some heavenly portal opening slowly, slowly, to let her in.

Suddenly Focco pricked up his ears; his sinewy legs began to tremble with tense eagerness; a curious shiver passed over his skin. It was as though the great creature were aware of some danger nearing.

"What is it, Focco?" asked Glava, laying a restraining hand on his bit. "Dost hear an unusual sound? Is an enemy nearing? Is some one coming to mar our solitude, to dispute our right to these rocks?"

But now she too was listening, listening with indrawn breath. From the valley beneath, a strange noise was mounting toward them, uncanny, like the far-off beat of the sea, weird like the souging of wild winds. Then Glava knew—knew to a certainty—that the multitude was coming toward her—coming to ask her help!

"They are coming, they are coming!" cried Glava to her horse. "It was not in vain that yesternight Glava felt their feet seeking her heart. They are coming—they are coming! But, since last they came, life has another meaning; a new light has spread over the earth; other will be the touch of Galava's hands, other the sound of her words. What was it Gaetano said once—said once out there amongst the clouds? that the Voice on the Mountain one day would have another sound. Strange it is, but it is almost as though Glava were fearing something—something that might creep toward her out of the dark. Answer, Focco! Focco, my beloved, can Glava tremble? Is it possible that Glava can

be afraid?" But for all answer Focco pulled upon the reins, tossing the foam from his bit, whilst his four feet danced on the rock as though fire were burning beneath his hoofs.

"Yes, we shall fly away home, Focco—home to the small stone house. I know not what is coming, Focco—if it be joy or if it be pain. But something is coming—I feel it—something is coming to my heart." And, laying her cheek upon the mane of her favourite, Glava gave him his head; and back over the rocks they clattered, back over the stones they flew. The sweat was streaming down Focco's flanks when horse and rider reached the small stone house.

There in the doorway stood Gaetano, Gaetano the white-frosted monk.

"They are coming!" cried Glava breathlessly as she sprang from her mount. "Many, many are coming, and they all want something of my heart."

"And thy heart has forsaken thy bosom," said the monk, advancing toward her. "Glava, where hast thou left thy heart?"

"Each heart must find its haven," answered Glava. "And mine is full of light!"

"Give me some of thy light!" cried the monk, hands extended toward her. "Leave me not alone in the night!"

"And Gorromio?" asked Glava suddenly, a shadow stealing over her face. "Listen, listen! his soul is crying—crying in the dark."

"Gorromio is dying," said the monk; and there was

a sound of finality in his voice. "Gorromo is dying; his pain will soon be past!"

"What sayest thou?" whispered hoarsely Glava, seizing his hand. "Thou sayest that Gorromo is dying? Gorromo, Gorromo—my love!" And Glava drew herself up to her full height, pressing both hands to her heart. What was it she was feeling? was it mortal anguish, or was it—was it—? Ah, no! It could not be! She had loved him, and she would not buy freedom at such a price.

"Hast thou seen him today?" asked Glava breathlessly. "Is he—is he very bad?"

"He lies in there," said Gaetano solemnly, "and death is written on his brow. He is pale, but his lips are smiling, and his eyes—"

"How are his eyes?" interrupted Glava.

"His eyes are always waiting—waiting for thy face."

"I cannot go to him," cried Glava, the back of her hand pressed to her brow. "I cannot go to him. I am afraid, afraid, afraid. . . ."

"He will not call thee," said Gaetano very gently. "Last night he fought with God. Today he is vanquished, and yet he has won."

"What dost thou know about it?" asked Glava with lowered voice.

"Last night I could not sleep," said Gaetano; "so, like a lost dog, I crept back to the chamber where he was suffering all alone. And outside his door—yes, in the dark—I crouched, and I suffered with him.

Hour by hour I writhed with his anguish, with him and yet apart—on the other side of the door. I drank of his bitterness drop by drop, and through the dark I heard his heart bleeding, bleeding to death.”

“Be still!” cried Glava. “Thy words are horrible. I will not hear them. See, the sun is shining; pain is falling from me—I can have naught to do with pain. Understand ye not that at times the heart will not accept it? At times the heart must have wings that lift it beyond all suffering—lift it higher than the voice of woe.”

“But woe rolls after it nevertheless, like a wave swollen by tears,” said Gaetano; “heavy tears that have many voices—voices that remember, voices that will not forget.”

“Be still, be still!” cried Glava again. “Take not my courage from me. Hark! they are coming. They are all coming, and I must, I *must*, be strong.”

“Glava, Glava!” cried old Volona, stepping from the house, “the multitude is coming toward thee, and it is thy wisdom they will be needing, and thou wilt not be refusing thy help.”

“My help, my help!” cried Glava almost wildly. “And why must they all be needing my help?”

“It is distraught thou art, my dear one,” said the old woman soothingly. “I am thinking that the monk has been upsetting thee with his words. It is loving thee he is; but one heart cannot accept every offering. Come, my Glava, come into thy chamber.”

And the old woman, laying a firm hand upon the girl's shoulder, led her away into the house.

Gaetano stood for a while looking after them. Then, abruptly turning toward the rock that overlooked the ocean, the monk fell to his knees and, extending his arms like a cross toward the horizon, let the sunlight fall full on his face. And after that, throwing himself forward, Gaetano beat his forehead many times against the ground.

XVIII

*'A soul whose dream was deeper than the
skies,*

*'A heart whose hope was wider than the
seas.*

'Alfred Noyes.

VOLONA had decked Glava's glorious body with Gorromó's golden gown. But instead of the golden-winged circlet, the maiden with her own hands had pressed a wreath of the flowering thorns on her brow. Then, slowly, Glava had strapped her sword about her, and slowly she had left the room.

Before the big chamber in which Gorromó lay waiting, her foot had hesitated—hesitated upon the threshold which she knew so well.

"Go to him," whispered Volona. "It is not refusing thou wilt be to go to him, and he with death upon him, standing on the edge of silence, and his soul still crying for thee."

"I cannot," whispered Glava, shuddering. "I cannot. My feet will not carry me. I feel dark waters rising to drown me, and I tell thee that I must live, Volona. Oh, Volona, let me live, let me live!"

"Child," said Volona harshly, "and thy God will be turning from thee, if thou wilt be passing this door

without entering. Within that chamber is sanctuary, Glava; it is knowing it I am. Be not afraid."

"I am afraid of his eyes," said Glava, "and of his lips that I can no more kiss."

"And rather will he be dying of thirst," said Volona, "than be asking of thee something that thou art unwilling to give."

"Is he suffering?" asked Glava like a frightened child.

"He has gone beyond the Sunshine," said Volona, "and beyond the Shadow of Fear. His foot is on the Threshold. It is the light from the Other Shore that already will be kissing his face."

"Is he changed?" asked Glava, her hand already on the door, but her face turned back toward her nurse.

"He standeth alone before the Great Portal that has not yet opened," said Volona; "and so it will be changed that he is, I am thinking."

"I shall go to him," murmured Glava with the ghost of a voice; then, pushing the door open, the golden-clad maiden entered the room.

Gorromó's eyes met her already on the threshold; they seemed to take hold of her, to absorb her, to make her their own. Glava saw of Gorromó but those terrible, sunken, burning eyes. It was toward those eyes that she moved unresisting, unquestioning, as one who enters the door of a church.

"It is the sun that comes into the chamber with thee, Glava," said Gorromó, in the voice that once she had loved, and that still awoke a deep echo some-

where in her soul. "And the multitude is nearing, Glava. Glava, dost thou feel strong?"

Glava did not answer; her feet were still advancing slowly, slowly advancing toward those eyes.

"Glava, the storm is over, and the day all the more radiant because of the darkness that was; art thou ready, Glava—ready for all they want?"

"I am ready," murmured Glava. "I have put on thy golden dress."

"Thou art as the Flame of Life, Glava—my Glava! Thy glory must shine for more than one man."

Glava shuddered, but she did not answer. She had been able to free her eyes, and now they were fixed on the ground.

"Thou hast been sun, moon, and stars to me, Glava; thou hast been dawn and dusk, and the hope that man carries in his heart. To me the sound of thy feet was as music, and when thine eyes rested upon mine it was as though all the angels of God had joined in the one same song."

Glava did not answer. Her heart was beating, beating, but she found no word to say.

"Glava," began Gorromo again, with a catch in his voice. "Glava, it sometimes happens that two world-wanderers who have started on a journey hand in hand—cannot—cannot remain together. It is perchance because the one loiters whilst the other goes too fast—or—because the one has perceived a light that the other cannot follow, or—Glava, it may also be that the one picks up a diamond which the

other did not see. And so it comes to pass that at the end of the way the wanderers are no more together—that the one stands before the Great Portal—alone. . . . Do not tremble, Glava; be not afraid. It is only this that I want to tell thee: There is a Land beyond the sunset, a Shore beyond the sea. There I shall await thee, Glava. But thou must not hurry Glava, because—because—I—can wait—”

The sad voice died away as though tears had smothered it with their burden. But once more it struggled for expression, and Gorrommo said: “Only one thing would I know of thee, Glava—one small thing, before I can rest. Is his face—as the dawn, Glava? As the dawn that will deepen into a mighty glory that will show thee thy way? Will he guide thy steps, Glava? Is his eye truthful, and is his hand strong?”

“His face is as the dawn,” murmured Glava like one speaking in her sleep. “His face is as the dawn; his eyes are truthful, and his hand is strong.”

“Then it is well, Glava,” said Gorrommo. “Then it is enough.”

Again a deep silence fell like a weight upon the room. But suddenly the man on the couch, making a superhuman effort, stretched his arms out toward his love, and like troubled waters rising out of the deep he cried with a gasp: “Kiss me, Glava! Only once again, kiss me. Kiss me before I go!”

Glava turned her lovely face toward him; her golden gown trembled above her heart; slowly she

leaned down to give him her lips; her face nearly touched his. The light of rapture was already creeping into the lover's look, when suddenly she drew back: "I cannot!" she cried like one in pain. "Hark! they are coming—they are coming, Gorromo! Hark! dost thou hear?"

Gorromo had fallen back upon his cushions. His face was deathly pale. "Yes, they are coming, Glava," he murmured. "Go to them, Glava; they also—need thee. Go, go. But—this evening, come back—come back to me, Glava, and give me the kiss that thou hast not given me, and give it to me even on my lips. It will not be too late."

And as he spoke these words a great rumour filled the air. It was the voices of the multitude coming toward Glava—toward Glava his love.

And now Glava was standing upon the rock that overlooked the ocean—upon the rock, the hard rock, against which Gaetano had beat his head in prayer. A golden flame she stood against the blue, blue sea. The sky was cloudless. A soft breeze played with her tresses. She was awaiting the multitude that rolled toward her, whilst the name of Glava rose from a thousand tongues into the air.

In a long trail they came, those that needed her; rich and poor, old and young, strong and feeble; some with a curse on their lips, some with a blessing; some in rags, some in scarlet, some in velvet; some with bodies all covered with sores. The blind

were amongst them—the blind, the deaf, and the dumb. They pushed, they crushed, they jostled, each hoping to be first; the rich man with the gold-embroidered mantle stood shoulder to shoulder with the lame beggar who had strewn ashes on his head.

Their voices rose to the heavens with a sound of tired tides rolling toward desert shores. Their breath lay heavy on the air; their hands, as they moved them about, were as anxious birds that have lost their nests. But all their eyes were turned toward Glava; toward Glava, their only hope.

From his couch by the window Gorromomo saw them, heard them, felt them, loved and hated them, turn by turn; but his eyes belonged only to Glava, to Glava his love. His soul was touching hers, his spirit was living in hers—living in hers for the very last time.

And Glava healed and blessed and consoled. Glava was as a being imbued with magic power, whose hands could not fail, whose tongue could not err, whose voice worked miracles, whose words led the trembling toward mysteries which they had never dared face. But it was Gorromomo's love that upheld her, that gave her strength and wisdom and the power to understand.

Suddenly, from out of the heaving jostling throng, a man stepped forward—a man all clad in white, with the face of a martyr who has been crucified upon a lonely road. With arms outstretched he threw himself down before Glava, calling upon her name;

his voice was as harp-strings that are being torn assunder. And Gorromó, seeing Gaetano's great anguish, felt that here was a soul that Glava must save—save at any price.

Calling upon his last remnants of strength, the man whom Glava had forsaken raised his shrunken, pain-stricken body and, in a last superhuman effort, sent out all his throbbing, passionate soul toward his love, filling her with a power so great that when her fingers touched the young monk's heart his sorrow fell from him as a shadow gives way before the sun. Standing up tall and joyful, with the movement of a dove mounting into the skies, Gaetano lifted his hands toward the God Whom he had so passionately denied.

As the dying man sank back amongst his cushions, the last thing he saw was Gaetano's countenance all radiant with divine ecstasy. And the last sound that reached Gorromó's ears upon earth was the young monk's song of thanksgiving, as with hands folded over his breast he turned away from Glava; from the woman who had so miraculously healed his soul and brought peace to his heart. But it may also have been the songs of the angels that Gorromó heard—their songs of welcome as with fingers of light they opened before him the Ultimate Gate to which he had come at last.

Silence and infinite peace filled the large low chamber—a silence deeper than the silence of night,

a peace vaster than the peace of sleep. The room seemed thronged with hushed holy thoughts that hovered like a veil of mystery against the raftered roof at which the pale face was staring; staring as though his dead eyes could see through it, into incommensurable distances which his living eye had never reached.

Volona, having watched from her own window the healing of Gaetano, had stolen on noiseless feet from her chamber to that of her master. A voice seemed to be calling her; it was to her as though shadowy fingers were leading her toward him. She felt no fear, but apprehension stole into her blood like cold trickling water. She did not hesitate before the closed door, but pressed down the handle and went in.

Like tangible beings peace and silence met her on the threshold. They greeted her like noble hosts sent out to receive her instead of the man who lay there so still—so grandly, terribly, inconceivably still.

Volona immediately comprehended that she was in the presence of death. Very softly, without any show of emotion, she approached the corpse; and after one long look into the wide-open eyes she laid her strong fingers upon them and closed them for ever to the things of this earth.

As she did so a curious rumour called her attention away from the dead toward the seething crowd beyond. She moved round to the other side of the

couch, her fingers still pressed upon the dead man's lids; and, resting her free hand upon the sill, old Volona leaned out of the window. What she saw filled her heart with fear. Glava was standing upright, against the sky, her hands upon the hilt of her sword. Around her the remaining supplicants had gathered; those in front had fallen to their knees, those behind were pressing forward. And as Volona gazed she seemed at first to see only hands—thousands of hands, all stretched toward the maiden, who stood perfectly still.

Hands had always been lifted toward Glava; this was no unusual sight. Why, then, did it make old Volona's blood turn cold? Why did these hands frighten her? Why was their message a different one? Volona felt it; and yet she did not understand. Was it perchance that dull sound of voices that made her tremble—that uncanny rumour like the rising of distant winds that bode no good? Oh! those hands! What did they mean? Why did they seem to threaten? Why did they look so hopelessly empty? What were they demanding? Why were they no more the hands of supplicants, but rather the hands of vindicators demanding revenge?

The fingertips that lay upon the dead man's eyes began to quiver. Some awful emotion was shaking Volona till she trembled like a withered leaf. But Gorrommo beside her lay silent, distant, indifferent to the storm that was rising—for the first time indifferent to Glava's welfare, heeding neither strife nor

peace, neither love nor hate, neither laughter nor fear. Volona had removed her fingers from the close-shut lids, and with both hands pressed upon the sill she was gazing outward, trying to catch what the mob was crying, trying to comprehend what was taking place.

At first she could distinguish no separate sentences. The crying voices were like the sound of a storm howling round forsaken walls. Suddenly a voice rose above the din, and the words were clearly audible: "Where is thy power? What dost mean by standing there immovable, thy hands like flowers that have no scent? We came here to be healed! Heal us! Heal us! Heal us! Free us from our woes!" And other voices could be heard: "She is an impostor! She tried to be a goddess and is but a maid." "She has led us on with false promises; she is not the Voice on the Mountain; she is only a fraud!" Then like a long-drawn lamentation the cry arose: "She is not Glava, she is not Glava—Glava never existed! She is but a delusion, but a shining lie; the devil invented her. She is a hope that forsakes us. Glava never was—never was!" Again and again the wail arose, rising and falling like a heavy tide: "She is a hope that forsakes us. Glava never was—never was!"

There was a push forward, the mob uttered a snarling sound that rolled like thunder round the rocks; the hands that were foremost began to lay hold of Glava's golden gown.

To the watching old woman the scene now became as some horrible nightmare, as some troubled vision out of the realms of fear. All those hands were touching *her*, Glava; were polluting the maiden's glorious raiment, tearing it to shreds, soiling it with their grimy fingers, tarnishing it with their fetid breaths. And at first, as in a trance, Glava stood unresisting, uncomprehending, indifferent, like one whose soul is asleep.

But suddenly a rough touch awoke revolt within her; and then the inconceivable came to pass. Glava the Mountain Maiden raised her sword, her shining glorious gem-studded sword. Swinging it like a flashing light, the woman who used to heal their woes, to carry their sorrows, to understand their complaints, stood like an avenging angel with a naked blade suspended above their cowering heads. The sun streamed down upon the gleaming metal, turning it into a living flame. Glava's torn robe floated about her body in rags of light. She seemed to have grown, to be rising like a pillar of fire out of the barren rock. The crown of blossoming thorns had wounded her forehead, and in large drops the blood was trickling slowly down her cheeks. At once terrible and magnificent was Glava. The Voice on the Mountain had changed from a blessing into a strange and fearful curse. And the multitude, looking upon her, shuddered; then, turning, covered their eyes and fled. Their feet were now rushing from the Mountain Maiden—rushing in disorderly masses

down the hill. The lame, the deaf, the blind, the crippled, rich and poor, young and old, hurried and scuffled, pushing, struggling, wrestling, impeding each other's advance. Their voices were terrible, their cries rose in imprecations to the skies, they jostled and hustled and were furiously frightened. Like a bounding stream of drifting refuse, the motly horde tore away out of sight.

As the trampling of a vanquished army in retreat the echo of their steps reached the ears of the faithful old servant, who, overcome by all that she had seen and heard, had fallen to her knees, her wrinkled forehead pressed against the sill of the window. Fainter and fainter came the sounds—fainter and fainter, till it was but a far-off whisper, dying away into space. Then suddenly all was silence—immense, illimitable silence, that hovered like giant wings over the tired day.

It was some time before the weary woman raised her head. But when she did so it was to her as though a light were advancing toward her; a light that glimmered and flickered against the sky—a light that had fallen from heaven to bring hope back to her soul. . . .

Glava, in her soiled but shimmering apparel, was coming slowly back to the house. Torn to shreds was the Mountain Maiden's golden gown. But high was her head; and between her white fingers flashed the blade of a glorious gem-studded sword.

XIX

*Love is more great than we conceive, and
Death is the keeper of unknown redemp-
tions.*

Fiona Macleod.

UPON the threshold stood Volona; and behind Volona the shadows were waiting—the shadows and peace and silence of death. Wordless was the old nurse's touch as she laid her dry hand upon the maiden's pulsing fingers—upon the fingers that were holding the sword.

Glava gave her the look of an animal of the wilds which, trapped on the edge of a forest, feels that there is no escape. Glava knew that something heavy and inexplicable was going to happen; but she knew not what it was.

“And it is waiting for thee that he is,” were the old woman's first words; “and I am thinking that it is the White Peace that he has found—the Peace that passeth all human understanding. Ye need not tread lightly, for verily he will not awake.”

Then the door that of yore used to open with a sound of familiar greeting, fell back upon its hinges with a groan, and Glava stood looking over the void toward something—something that was voiceless—

something that, with upturned face and closed eyes, had nothing more to say.

Glava looked back toward her nurse. A terrified question lay in her eyes. She felt as though her feet had reached the edge of a precipice and that the next step would hurl her into bottomless darkness. She dared neither speak, move, nor think; her soul had suddenly shrunk, had become a small frightened thing, like a wounded bird that beats its useless wings in the dust.

Volona, who had stepped into the chamber behind her, took her by the hand. Unresisting, Glava allowed herself to be led toward that great silence. But when she stood before it, it was to her as though she were contemplating a visage which she had never seen before. It looked at her, and yet was not looking, because its eyes had gone elsewhere. Where had the eyes gone? oh! where? where?

“When was it?” was all Glava found to say; and she said it in a voice that was new to her—in a voice that belonged to some one else, to a stranger, a voice that was as unknown as that face which lay there upturned toward the raftered roof.

“And it will have been at the moment when thy power fell from thee, I am thinking; at that moment when the tide turned, and the waves that had been kissing thy feet rose to destroy thee. I have that thought of my thinking that it was at that moment that he died.”

“And he forsook me?”

It was half question, half reproach, half a cry of astonishment. That Gorromó's great love could forsake her was as if the sky could allow its stars to drop to the ground.

"He forsook me at the moment when I needed him," said Glava; for this was the first thought that came to her simple mind.

"And it will be thou who didst forsake him," said old Volona, lifting an accusing finger. "And he never complaining; over the Edge of Silence did he step all alone, without crying out, because thy hand had abandoned him when his Hour was upon him. Everything did he give thee—heart, blood, brain, thought; and, having no more to give, being weary, he breathed his soul into the Almighty's hand. But because of his boundless love of thee, thou wast able to work a miracle upon the white-frosted youth whom the devil had chosen for his own. He gave his last breath so that the brother sufferer should go healed from thy side. And thou—thou wilt be standing here asking why Gorromó forsook thee! Glava! Glava! and will it be that thou hast no heart?"

Glava stood for a moment like one turned to stone, her eyes fixed upon that strange secret face, which, like a close-locked casket, hid the mystery of its last suffering away from every eye. And suddenly all became dark around Glava. The sun left the skies, the light went from her heart, that white face alone seemed to shine amidst seething worlds

of gloom; each object lost its colour, all things were meaningless, seemed to be retreating from her, there was neither distance nor nearness, neither past nor future—only the great throbbing, torturing realization that it was too late, too late, too late. With a cry of distress Glava threw herself on the ground before the bed.

Yes, too late to give him the kiss that he had longed for, too late to beg for forgiveness, too late to pronounce the word that would have made him less lonely, too late to tell him of her happiness. For, even if his heart had broken over it, Gorromomo surely would have understood. He would have blessed her; he would have let her go; holy words would he have given her; without complaint would he have pressed the wanderer's staff into her hand, and he would have indicated to her the least stony road.

She had left him to die alone, wordless, carrying his own silent sorrow alone. Yet had they not once shared every thought? Had not their happiness been holy, had it not floated through this chamber, intangible, sacred, like the incense that veils the lily-decked altar of a church? She had forsaken him; she had not spoken; she had looked into the woe of his eyes, and she had remained dumb. Yet one word, one small word, would have delivered his soul, would have made his going less dark, less lonely, less cruel! And now it was too late, too late—too late!

Rising from her knees, Glava turned to her old

nurse, who stood silent beside her, arms crossed, lips tight shut. For Volona believed in requital, and that each soul must drink of the cup of bitterness when its hour had come. Therefore had the old woman no words of comfort for the maiden whom she loved. But Glava turned to her because she was the only rock in her sea of distress; turned to her with the cry of a frightened child who, knowing itself guilty, still hopes for help.

“I could not!” she said as though in self-defence. “Canst understand, Volona? Another kiss was on my lips, and it would have been treachery to the old love and desecration to the new if I had kissed him—kissed him, and were it but once—”

Glava threw out her hands as though to explain something that was inexplicable; something that she herself could not understand. Then with a sob she continued: “My heart was full of a light which I could share with none in this house. The past was past. Gorromo’s hand could reach me no more; his words had no meaning, his voice no sound. I saw him, I heard him, I felt him, but from very far. Distance lay between us, a sudden insurmountable intangible distance; and I could not come back.” Glava covered her face with her hands. “I knew that I was stabbing him—knew it and yet did not know it. Nor did I feel it quite. Because my joy seemed so much greater to me than his pain, it seemed to flood the whole world, isolating me from all that had been. Yes, I was stabbing him. Perhaps. . . . But life it

was that had pressed the dagger between my fingers; the Spring had given it to me, and the wide wild woods and the stars of heaven and the flowers of the earth. Love had armed me with relentless strength—a strength that led me beyond mercy and farther than pity itself. One of us had to suffer, one had to remain alone. But because it was I who had found light, darkness became his share. I had not searched for light: it had come to me, it had chosen my heart as its dwelling place. It was at once a marvellous revelation and a cruelly great weight. It had torn the old life, the old peace from me; but it had unclosed a door more holy than any door I had ever entered before. It was a gift from above, and yet it destroyed another temple that had also been holy, that also had been blessed by God.”

A wail of distress rose from Glava’s throat; like the mourners of old, the Mountain Maiden beat her breast. “Tell me why it should be thus, Volona? Tell me why? Why? Why?” Volona, with the uncannily noiseless movements habitual to her, knelt down near the bed. Drawing Glava to her knees beside her, she folded her hands, gazing into the waxen-pale face. “And if thou wilt be looking into his face, sure peace will come to thee, for it will be peace that he is finding beyond the Gates of Sorrow. But meseems it is for some sign from thee that he will be awaiting. Lay thy head for a last time on his heart—sure and now it will be no treachery. Some word wilt thou be finding to make his rest more sweet. If

thou hast no message for him even now, then overgreat will be the weight of the soil on his grave, I am thinking. Ay, ay, dust on his heart and dust on his eyes, but it is that last look of his that I am remembering—that last look that I covered over with my old, old hand; ay, for sure, but not before seeing that there was one question that he still was asking, one wish that had remained unfulfilled. As to the whys and wherefores of this sad old world, sure it will be life and life only that will give answer to thee. But whilst there is yet time, it is for thee to answer that question I closed away behind those heavy lids.”

Glava went up close to the couch and, bending down, gazed intently into the dead man's face. Awful it was in its silent aloofness. It seemed to be guarding some deeper knowledge than it had known upon earth. Pain was over, the struggle ended, all anxiety a thing of the past; the eyes questioned her no longer, the loving hands were at rest. The cage-door was wide open: now she could fly whither she would. But at that moment Glava had the feeling that never again would she spread wing, that a song of gladness would never more rise from her heart. Old Volona, watching her, knew better; yet no word did she say, for the old woman felt that Glava must have it out alone with the dead.

“I know what he wants,” said Glava at last in a hoarse whisper, after having gazed and gazed as though she could not tear her eyes from the awful stillness of that marble-white face. “He told me to

come back in the evening and to give him the kiss I owed him—to give it him, and even on his lips!” Then, throwing from her the sword which her hands were still clasping, Glava fell once more to her knees. Lifting the lifeless mask in both her hands, upon the stiff cold lips that had loved her the Mountain Maiden pressed a long, passionate, dolorous kiss. Volona, who was watching the scene, pressed her two palms against her mouth as though to stifle a cry.

For a long moment Glava remained with her lips against the lips that responded to hers no more. Then, leaning back, she tenderly lifted the lifeless visage, holding it before her, staring at its dreadful inscrutable indifference, whilst wild waves of remorse and regret flooded her soul, making her cry aloud for the days that nothing—nay, not even God—could give her back. She felt as though she were drowning; she had the sensation that dark floods were mounting ever higher and higher to quench the flames in her heart. Then, suddenly, something broke within her—something that gave her exquisite relief—and, falling with her head upon the cold stone floor, Glava cried and cried as though her heart would break.

Volona did not bend toward her; neither did she stretch out a helping hand. Volona’s conception of justice was that the Mountain Maiden must fight her sorrow alone. So the old nurse only turned her head, gazing out of the window toward the sun, whose journey over the skies Gorrommo would never more watch upon earth. Her eyes were dry; but, in spite

of her seeming indifference, every one of the tears shed by Glava there on the floor at her feet was but an added weight on her tired heart. Volona knew that Glava was weeping her sorrow away, that at her age tears could cleanse. But Volona knew also that she, the weary one, would have to carry the burden of this day like a scar on her soul; yea, verily, and carry it until her hour of death.

Glava, lifting her tear-stained face from off the floor, asked in a trembling voice: "And what now, Volona? What now? What now?"

The old nurse helped her to her feet, smoothed the tangled locks from her brow, and, looking deeply into the fear-filled eyes, said: "Glava, my lamb, and it is into the valleys that thou must go. A goddess thou hast deemed thyself, and art but a woman—a woman, with a woman's heart, a woman's hope, and a woman's woe. He who lies there gave thee, I am thinking, a power that was never thine. His love was as a flame lighting thy soul, and when the flame was consumed thy power forsook thee. And sure it was at the very moment when God called him back before his throne. And it will be all those hands I am seeing, all those angry hands, and thy danger, and that dear face of thine leaning over them. And it was not understanding thou wast at all, at all, what had happened, any more than they. Only when their blessing turned to curses and their fingers to claws, then the wild huntress entered thy body, chasing

the goddess away, and thy sword it was that gleamed above their cowardly heads like the wrath of God. Glava had become a woman once more!

"Therefore will I be telling thee, the light which thou hast been living by for four long years has melted like foam upon the sand; and now, I am thinking, the hour has struck when the Voice on the Mountain must go down into the valley. It is the clouds that thou must be quitting, to walk upon firmer ground. It is not knowing I am what spell calls thee, nor toward what land thy foot will be turning. It is not many answers Volona has received in her life. Nor will I be hindering thy going, even if I could. My eyes will be growing dim, and shaky my hands. The young brood must be building nests whilst the old ones who cannot fly must be left behind.

"Now that thy kiss lies upon that upturned face, it is saying I am, Go to thy Love; thy instinct will lead thee. But it is hoping I am that he has a brave face—" There was a sob in old Volona's throat; but she put a shaking hand to it, and it was still. "I am not knowing if thou wilt be coming back to old Volona. But it will be waiting for thee she will be, hour for hour, day for day. And sure it will be moonrise in the blackness of my heart when I will be hearing the sound of thy step. But now thou must be going from me to thy woman's life.

"I will go," said Glava simply, as one who does not question her Fate. "Doochroon is waiting for me down there where the flowers bloom blue."

“Ay, ay, go, my dear lamb; go to thy Doochroon, and may his heart be a nest to thee, and his hand a promise, and his eyes two stars that will show thee thy way in the dark.” Covering her mouth with her hands to suppress the cry that rose from her lonely soul, the old woman turned away.

But Glava, in her torn golden gown, bent down to pick up her fallen sword. Then without casting a last glance toward the window, she silently left the room.

XX

*. . . and their thoughts wandered to-
wards some bliss
Unknown, unfathomed, far, how far
away,
Where God has gathered all the eternities
Into strange heavens, beyond the night
and day.*

'Alfred Noyes.

VOLONA was alone in the small stone house—alone with the silent dead. On her knees was old Volona—on her knees on the hard cold floor. The day was dying in golden glory, but Volona's work of love was done. Upon his couch lay Gorromio, decked in the attire which he had worn when belonging to the great ones of this earth. A crimson mantle was folded about him. The once so tender hands rested lightly like two strange flowers upon the hilt of his sword. But his face was so transparent, and so pale his forehead, that Volona had not dared weigh it with a heavy steel helmet; so, leaving it uncovered, she had but smoothed his golden-brown hair.

Kneeling beside him after having completed her work, Volona's hands had encountered the thorny wreath which Glava had worn when the mob had

turned against her, their love changing into fury as the storm rises out of quiet seas, that very same morning that seemed so long, so long ago. The miraculous blossoms were snow-white, still unfaded between the hard, long thorns. No doubt the wreath had fallen from Glava's forehead when she bowed it in sorrow to the ground. Volona had perceived that the points of the prickles were stained with blood—with Glava's blood. Therefore upon the lover's heart had the old woman laid it—upon the heart which Glava had broken with her two white hands. The setting sun was now falling upon it, turning it into gleaming gold. Of gold were also the walls of the chamber, and of gold the head of the weary woman who was praying with face hidden amongst the crimson folds of her master's cloak. The light lay like a blessing upon these lonely two, speaking of joys beyond the sunset and of hopes beyond the stars.

And that old secret of the setting sun
Which, to the glory of eternity,
Time tolling like a distant bell,
Evermore faints to tell,
And ever telling, never yet has told.

But one spot in the room had gathered about it the greatest glory; the face of the lover, that still lone face. As the halo lies round the visage of a martyred saint, thus did the dying sunlight encircle the dead man's brow. But Volona, praying, saw not

its radiance. To her that pale countenance was but the countenance of death.

So absorbed was Volona in her prayers that she heard not the loud knock which broke the silence around her. It was repeated once, twice, thrice, before she lifted her face from her hands. Thud, thud, the knocks were repeated. Rising stiffly from her humble attitude, heavily yet silently she moved over the floor, as though dragging after her some deadly weight. Opening the door, she remained standing with downcast eyes and folded fingers, ready for whatever was to come. At last looking up, she started and, throwing out her hand, caught at her bosom as one who has been shot through the heart.

On the threshold an old man was standing, stately, white-bearded, with a cloak thrown over his shoulder and a spear in his hand. About his helmet lay a golden circlet. He carried his head like one in the habit of looking over the prostrate throngs toward horizons which, he knows, he can hold in the five curved fingers of his hand. Hard was his eye, yet tired as the eye of a shepherd who has watched too long; his gait was upright, and yet when looking at him one felt that his shoulders were accustomed to carry a weight beneath which others would no doubt have succumbed. Step by step, as the stranger advanced, Volona retreated, till she stood beside the silent sleeper. One hand resting upon his forehead, she awaited whatever words were to be said. The sun was now withdrawing his radiance from the

lonely chamber, leaving the walls already dark; but he seemed loth to bid farewell to the lover whose heart had been broken, loth to leave him to the sad shades of night. As the tall stranger approached, the light still lay warm and luminous upon the up-turned face.

Bending over it, for the first time the old man spoke: "At the death-bed of what man do I find thee, Volona Lochanlee? And where is she whom I left to the care of thy heart?"

"And little will ye have been minding about me and my heart, O Dullan Dulach," was the rough reply he got.

"Again I am asking thee, Volona Lochanlee: Where is she whom I have come to seek? whom mine eyes, that have seen too much, want to rest upon at the end of a weary day?"

"And they will not all have been weary—thy days, Dullan Dulach, I am thinking," was all the answer she gave.

"Thou art ever the same Volona Lochanlee, unbendable, hard, and lonely as the wild westerling wind."

"And it will not have been my fault if I am lonely," said Volona fiercely. "I bent once too often, Dullan Dulach, and thou wilt be knowing it. But once was enough for me; now I will be standing upright, and it will not be the looking into thy face that will ever more bring me low."

"Volona Lochanlee, where is my daughter?" said

the man, seizing her hand." Answer that question if thou canst!"

"And there will be no question of Dullan Dulach's I will be unable to answer, I am thinking," spoke Volona proudly, lifting her head. "And it is into the valleys that Glava, thy daughter, has wandered—wandered right away from this house."

"Gone! Gone! And since when?"

"And it may be that it is only since this morning; and it may be that it was written in the stars that this very day thy heart should remember, when it is too late!"

"Volona Lochanlee," cried the old warrior, "what is thy meaning? And who is this silent pale man?"

"And it will be telling thee I shall, who is this man," said Volona harshly. "And it may be that he is the Almighty's eternal justice. Life, Love, Sorrow broke him, as once it was Life, Love, and Sorrow that broke the heart of Volona Lochanlee."

"Who is he?" repeated the stranger. "Untie thy old tongue and speak."

"And I think thou wilt be for remembering that my tongue was not always old, Dullan Dulach," said Volona. "But because thou hast come from thy laughing life into my silence, I will not be keeping dumb about what I know." Bending with a tender expression toward the dead man, Volona passed a trembling hand over his waxen face. "And when it was living he was, this man loved thy daughter. But she, in the wild recklessness of her youth, led him

nigh unto the Shadow of Death. And it will have been four years ago if I am rightly remembering—four long years ago. And since that night when he fell with his stallion from a terrible height, it is here that he has been lying, loving the maiden who brought him to the edge of his grave.”

“But who was he? Who was he?” insisted the stranger.

“Ye need be for fearing no treachery, Dullan Dulach, thou proudest of men! My Lord Gorrommo could be counted amongst the great ones of this earth. I have not been for forgetting the pride of thy race. But having once looked upon Glava, he never more could tear his eyes away. His love grew and grew, spreading like a plant that covers the earth with its blossoms. His heart could have been likened unto an ever-leaping flame that no wind could extinguish; for, strange as it may seem to thee, Dullan Dulach, there are some men that love thus.”

“And Glava?” asked the proud man with bated breath.

“And Glava—is thy daughter!” cried the old woman harshly. “Of thy very flesh and blood. She took; and took all that he gave her, nor was she for knowing how much she took. And when he had filled her brim full with love, she turned her face from him and cast the treasure he had breathed into her at another man’s feet.” Volona paused for a moment breathless; but before Dullan Dulach could put in a word she was again speaking: “Ay, for sure and it

was his love that had prepared her for the great Hour of Light; but when came that hour, the torch he had put into her hand was borne toward another heart. For thus it is that love finds requital here upon earth: As thou in other days didst forsake Volona Lochanlee, thus did Glava forsake the man who loved her, never turning back to read the sorrow in his face!”

Ever louder grew the old woman’s voice. It rose like a great wave through the silence of the room: “For thus does the Great One above deal out his treasures upon earth, not counting the measure he puts into human hands: He will have been allowing thee to break Volona’s life; and, caring little for our human conception of justice, He was also for allowing thy daughter to revenge old Volona—and she never knowing that Volona was her mother, blood of her blood!”

“Why speak of revenge, Volona? In what way could this man’s death be requital to thee?”

“That is because thou art not knowing of the truths from behind the stars. One man takes, drinks, empties, and throws the cup away, and in that case the woman it is who must weep; and then a maiden is born as fair as the day that rises in the East, and it is her turn, I am thinking, to take, to drink, to empty, and to throw the cup away! My daughter arose paying back to another the wrong that her father did unto me; and God alone will be knowing why he chooses one for sacrifice and the other for joy! The

secrets of the Almighty are fearful and not to be conceived by the human mind. It will be a full measure of joy and of pain that the Terrible One will be hoarding in his skies, and it will not be mattering to Him in His Greatness who receiveth the joy and who the pain. Therefore was it written that Volona's head should be bowed in the dust whilst Glava's two hands were over-small to hold the light that was her share in this world."

"Thou art a terrible woman, Volona Lochanlee. Dost verily mean that Glava was never told that she was living beside a mother's heart?"

"And it will be the truth thou art saying, Dullan Dulach. Think ye that I would be bowing so proud a head by telling it that she was the daughter of a woman who had once carried wood on her strong young back? Nay, nay, Dullan Dulach! And it may be for requital that I am on this sad old Earth—but not upon the head of the innocent, I am thinking; nay, nay! Volona Lochanlee, the wood-cutter's daughter, was beautiful in her youth—though not so very young, either, when Dullan Dulach cast an eye upon her untamed strength—but she will be for remembering the pride of the race that cast her aside when her day was done. This I will be telling thee: if Volona Lochanlee will not have been worthy of being a mother beneath the face of the sun that shines over palace and castle doors, then neither will she have been worthy of being a mother beneath the damp grey clouds on a mountain top!

"I may not be knowing the ways of the Great, but I will be knowing the ways of the Heart. And this is a thought of my thinking: eagles must remain eagles, and they need never be knowing in what nest Fate let them be born. A crowned man, I am thinking, was Glava's father: therefore was she of high degree. And prouder was I of being her servant than if one day she should look down upon me, knowing me to be one who had been cast away. And now, Dullan Dulach, of the great grey eyes, what will it be thou hast to say to Volona Lochanlee?"

For a moment the proud man stood silent, looking from the dead face to that of the woman who stood upright, defiant, her eyes gleaming from beneath her heavy dark brows. "And maybe thy pride was finer than mine, Volona Lochanlee," he said sadly at last. "But tell me where is our daughter. I would see her, for my heart is weary, as my eyes are weary of the tinkling-jingling things of this earth. No son hath Dullan Dulach within his palace walls, because of his beauty the Almighty having called him to happier shores; and now I am asking for my daughter. Oh! where is she, Volona Lochanlee?"

Volona came a step nearer and looked fiercely into the crowned man's face. "And if I am telling thee that it is too late, Dullan Dulach—too late? For Glava has gone to her Love, and I will not be knowing which way her feet may have turned. The time had come for the young bird to spread wing, so I let

it fly to its mate. It will have reached the heart of Love, I am thinking, whilst I, the doubly forsaken one, have remained to pray by the dead."

"Thou art not telling me," cried Dullan Dulach, "that thou dost not know whither she has gone? Hast thou no love left in thy heart?"

"It is not for Dullan Dulach to be talking of love at all, at all! The part of the old one is over, I am thinking; the chill is in my bones. It is on the Edge of Silence that my soul is hovering; therefore was it written in the stars that Glava should go to her Love, stepping over the heart of her mother and of the one who loved her too well. It was no part Dullan Dulach had in our lives, I am thinking: therefore he should not lift his voice as accuser at all, at all; four-and-twenty years can wipe out many a right."

"But thou wilt not be saying that thou didst let Glava go alone, all alone, into the wide wicked world, away from thy mother's heart?"

"Glava had no mother," said the woman harshly. "It was but an old nurse she had—a nurse with a silver-white head. Alone she went, with her spear, her sword, and her horse. Red-golden was Focco, as proud as any steed her father will be riding in through the gates of his cities. Not so weary are thy bones as mine, Dullan Dulach; for a man of thy blood the world is never too wide. Go! Search for thy daughter! There are many roads that cross each

other over the face of the earth, and it may be that one day, before thy head be laid low, thou wilt be meeting the daughter of Dullan Dulach beneath the face of the sun.

“Beautiful is Glava as the rising dawn, beautiful as the clouds that lift from the storm, beautiful as the swan on the deep, beautiful as the snow that the moon will be kissing with pale shining lips, beautiful as a victory won by the gods; and as sign that she is a king’s daughter she will be carrying in her long white hand the sword that thou didst give me at the hour of her birth. But when Dullan Dulach meets his daughter beneath the face of the sun, may he not be remembering old Volona Lochanlee, who, having never been wife, could never be mother to the daughter of a king. Let her name be forgotten, as her voice must be forgotten, and forgotten the woe of her heart.

“Some will be putting their pride, I am thinking, in a name; some in sacks of gold; some in a sword; some in lands they have conquered; and some in hearts they have broken. But the pride of Volona Lochanlee is, that she never bowed her head in the dust.”

“And thou dost not even know the name of the man she went to?” cried the father.

“I think I will have been hearing that she called him Doochroon,” said Volona. “And when her lips said it, it was like a swan flying into the face of the moon.”

“And didst thou never tell her that a father she had? an old, old father on a throne?”

“Like unto the sun that shines was Glava, like unto the winds that blow, unto the waters that flow, unto the clouds that pass; she was not for needing a father, a crown, or a throne; her heart was never weighted with the why and wherefore that trouble other hearts. It was only when love quickened within her that she was for asking who she was.”

“And thou didst not tell her even then? not even then, Volona Lochanlee?”

“And sure I did not tell her even then,” said Volona in a dull, revengeful voice.

The tall man made a gesture of hopelessness. He was at a loss to understand the old woman’s reasoning. It was to him as though he stood before a heavy gravestone upon which he dared not tread. “And were there no tears in thine eyes when thou sawest thy daughter go from thee?”

“No one, I am thinking, ever paused to count the tears of Volona Lochanlee,” said the old one savagely “—except perchance Him who sees into places that are dark. But when I saw Glava, Dullan Dulach’s daughter, riding down the mountain side, it was as though she had taken her mother’s heart with her as a shield against the woes of this world. For verily Volona has no more need of a heart up here in the clouds. Yet Focco’s hoofs as they rang on the rocks were as the sound of nails, I am thinking; of nails being driven into my coffin-lid.”

Night had stolen into the chamber. The two strange companions stood in the dark. There was a long silence, and then the old man raised his head, peering through the obscurity at the woman whom once he had loved. "And shall I leave thee up here in the clouds, Volona Lochanlee, or wilt thou come down with me into my tired life?"

"It is too late, I am thinking, Dullan Dulach, for my feet to follow thee, were it even to the Gates of Paradise. But I will be asking of thee to send thy people tomorrow to dig a deep grave for this man who lies here silent with his broken heart. Into the rock shall he be laid, there where Glava stood in the days of the triumph that was given to her by his love. In the folds of his crimson mantle will I wrap him, and I will place him so that his eyes shall be turned toward the pathway over which her feet one day perchance may lead her back. And now, for the last time, oh! Dullan Dulach, I would be for looking into those fierce grey eyes that once were heaven to me." And, moving noiselessly over the floor, Volona fetched from beside the hearth a torch, lighted it, and held up its flickering flame to the proud man's face.

Strange indeed was the look exchanged by the lovers of yore, there in the presence of the dead; strange, awful, and silent as a meeting beyond the grave. Long did they gaze at each other by the lurid red light of the torch, whilst the man who had loved too well lay beside them silent, distant, and dumb.

Suddenly the crowned man bent forward and, laying his lips upon the old woman's time-scarred brow, said: "And it was springtime once, Volona, my dear one—spring-time once in our hearts."

"And it was thy hand, oh! Dullan Dulach," answered the old woman solemnly, "that once led Volona Lochanlee to the sources of Love. Therefore be thou blessed, oh! Dullan Dulach, blessed all the days of thy life!"

Then the old warrior turned from the woman of his youth; and, throwing wide the door, Volona let the stranger out into the silence of the night.

Long did she stand there on the threshold, torch in hand, like unto some ancient figure of woe that dumbly looks down upon the inexplicable sorrows of life. Then, turning slowly, she re-entered the house. Shutting the door behind her, she went over to the couch. Fixing the torch at the feet of the corpse, the lonely old woman knelt down on the stones to pray for the dead. . . .

When the sun rose at dawn over the sleeping ocean, the torch had burned out. But Volona Lochanlee was still praying—praying for the dead.

THE END

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